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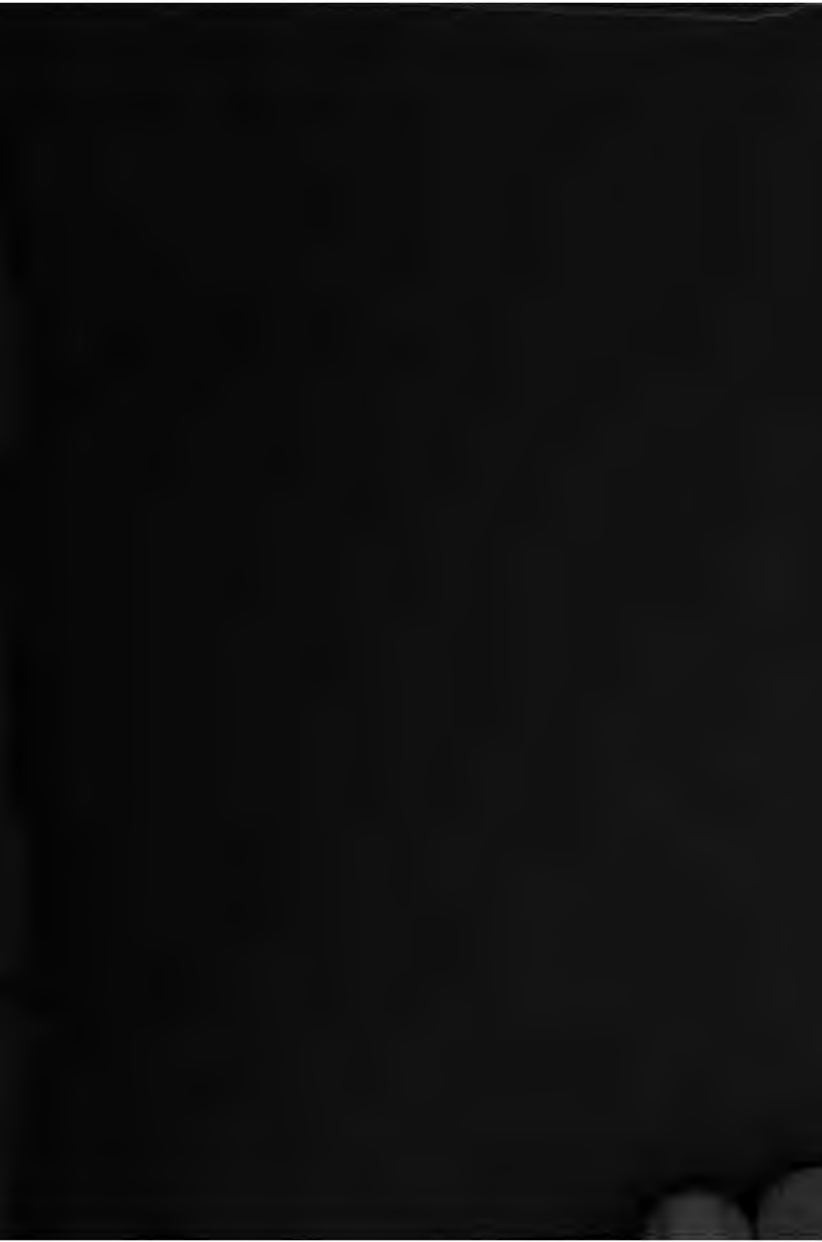
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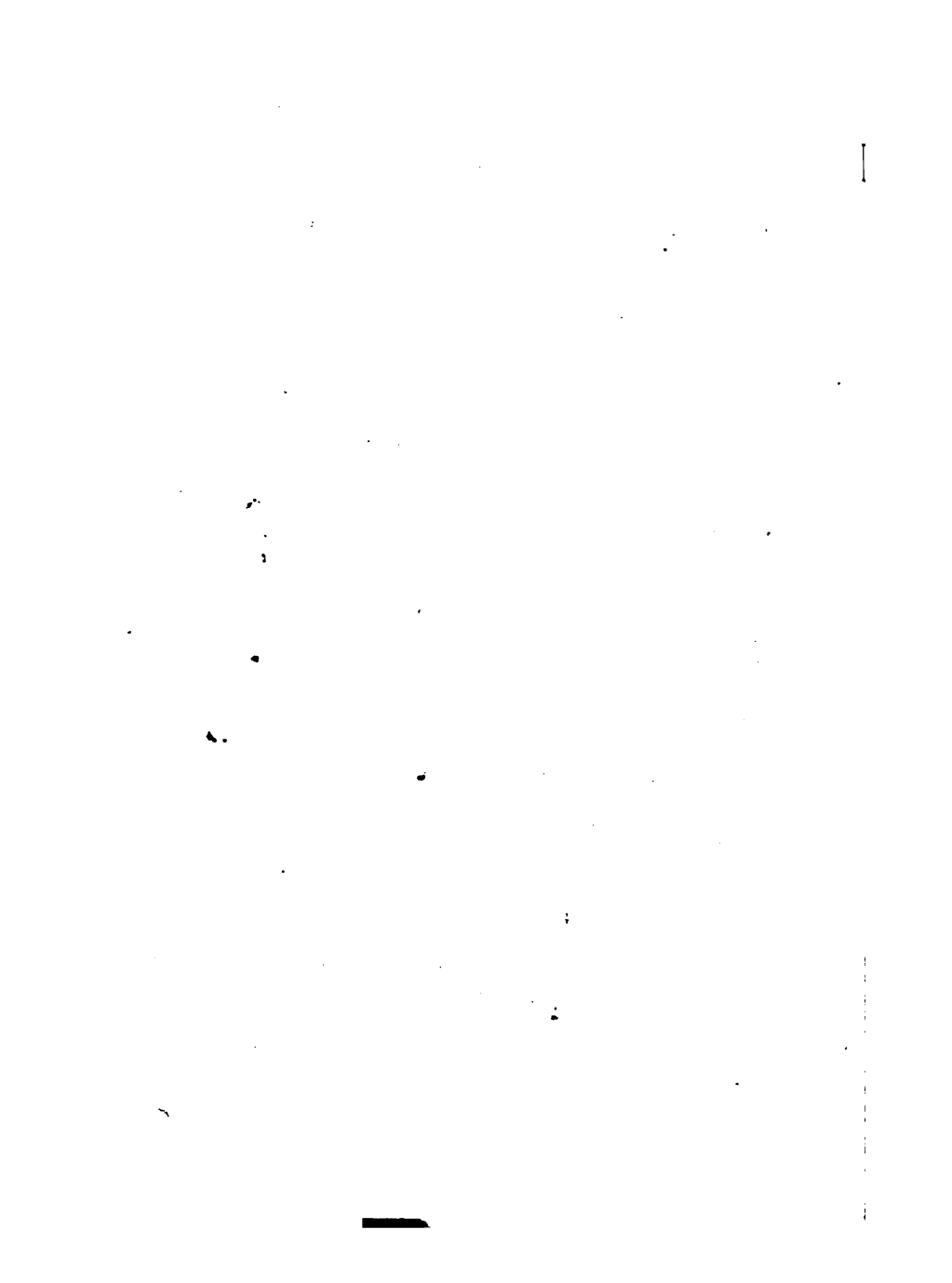


DAALA-MIST.



INTERIOR OF A SHETLAND COTTAGE.





DAALA—MIST;

OR,

STORIES OF SHETLAND.

BY

JESSIE M. SAXBY.

WITH PICTURES BY JOHN T. REID.



EDINBURGH: ANDREW ELLIOT.

1876.

251. c. 466.



Dedicated to my Boys,
HARRY, STEPHEN, TOM, HORACE,
AND CHARLIE.



P R E F A C E.

THE first thing that the sun looks upon when he climbs above the Shetland hill-tops is the pale, vapoury, ghostly Daala-mist. It glistens in the morning light and slowly winds towards the sky like some spirit rising heavenward.

The last thing that the sun looks upon when he dips below the northern sea is the grey, quiet, solemn Daala-mist coming up from the hollows and creeping along the valley till it has spread itself over all the landscape. How it changes the aspect of everything it touches. Fisher cots look through its magnifying folds like castles of eld. Homely peasants drest by the magic Daala-mist wear fairy mantle, bridal robe, burial shroud. It rolls its fleecy folds across the common, and you fancy you are gazing on a limitless ocean. It hangs itself against the mountain sides and straight their heathery braes are wearing a belt of silver. It hovers over the running stream. It haunts the stagnant marsh. It broods above

the lake, and you behold ever-changing pictures of things grim and shadowy, fanciful and real. It is born of the earth, but is ever mounting upward, and its breath seems to wear the vague outline of a grand Excelsior.

In summer time and harvest ; in spring and wild winter. By morn, eve, mid-day and night I have watched the dear Daala-mist, believing it to be a spiritual appearance of all the romance of my Fatherland. I have loved it, gathered it to my heart, and woven it with my imagination until it has come forth from the same a part of the isles I love.

“ And God who made those things to be,
The ocean and the sun,
Colour, and sound, and you, and me,
Was pleased to see it done.

And all the angels would be glad,
If in the world He built,
(Although there must be some things sad)
No drop of joy were spilt.

But all the beauty in the earth,
And skies, and hearts of men,
Were gently gathered at its birth
And loved and born again.”

CONTENTS.

	Page
THE CHANGELING,	I
AMONG THE ROCKS,	32
THE BROTHER'S SACRIFICE,	41
THE HAUNTED HOLME,	68
A PRACTICAL JOKER,	89
AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SHETLAND SHAWL,	94
FOUR STORIES ABOUT A FAMILY OF GULLS—	
I. MAMMA KNOWS BEST,	122
II. ALL FOR LOVE,	126
III. SELF LAST,	130
IV. DUTY FIRST,	134
HAROLD'S GRAVE,	138
IN THE TOILS OF THE NORTH SEA,	148
A YOUNG HERO,	164
THE WILL-HELPER,	170
SHETLAND GIANTS,	187
JENNY'S HOOK,	192

CONTENTS.

	Page
LITTLE LONDONERS IN SHETLAND—	
I. A RIDE NORTHWARDS,	212
II. ABOUT BALTASOUND,	220
III. OFFSPRING OF OCEAN,	226
MINNIE MADGE,	233
A PETTED SHELTY,	260
THE BOY-FOWLER,	267
OFF THE NORTH POINT,	273
A WILD YULE E'EN,	284
SOUVENANCE OF TRAVELLERS,	303

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

(These sketches will be gladly recognized by all who are familiar with that charming book, "Art Rambles in Shetland," by JOHN T. REID, who kindly "lends his artist skill to aid a feeble pen.")

Interior of a Shetland Cottage,	. . .	<i>Frontispiece.</i>
Dore Holme, North Mavin	. . .	<i>Facing page, 41</i>
Gaida Stack,	. . . , ,	94
Sumburgh Head,	. . . , ,	148
Sheldie Cave,	. . . , ,	170
The Drongs,	. . . , ,	192
Old Kirk, Mid-Yell,	. . . , ,	233
Crow's Stack,	. . . , ,	303
Horn of Pa-pa, and Vae skerries,	. . .	<i>Page 37</i>
Niddestir,	. . . , ,	60
Gloup Holme,	. . . , ,	123
Stone Cross, Norwick,	. . . , ,	216
Trees in Shetland Garden,	. . . , ,	225
Cradle of Noss,	. . . , ,	268
Rocks near Reawick,	. . . , ,	297

STORIES OF SHETLAND.

THE CHANGELING.

COME with me to my wild Norland home, and sit you down by my Shetland fireside, where the blaze of the burning peat casts a strange fantastic shadow on the wall. Cluster around my chair and let me weave you a story of my fatherland. A tale of the legends and superstitions which still sway the minds of the Hialtlanders : a tale of my rocks, and hills, and moors, and ravening waters, and of the fair-haired children who have received their blue eyes and ruddy cheeks from long lines of Viking ancestors ; of the handsome boys and bonnie girls who run about our islands and gather within the humble cottages, and revel in a freedom almost as untrammelled as that of the gipsy or Arab.

I will tell you of one lone island than which a fairer cannot be, and I will describe to you a cottage called Ordaal, which stood on the slope of a hill, and which had plenty of picturesque hillocks, ravines, rocks, and dales behind and on either side. I will

tell you of a winding lake which lay below the cottage, about a stone's throw from the door ; but I can never, never find words to describe the white and shining sand which formed a glittering zone between the dreamy, dark blue lake, and the hill with its brown-golden heather. I can never, never tell you how richly the sunbeams fell at evening upon the straw-roofed cottage, or how they bathed the lone hill-side in a glory all their own. I can never, never tell you how fair the lake, its green islets, and surrounding mountains looked when the moon came out and clad them in a robe of silver sheen. I can never, never tell you how unutterably sweet was the plaintive wail of the golden plover, nestling among the heather-tops ; how full of music were the waves ; how fair and peaceful the lambs on the hill-side ; how grand the rocks. No, I can never describe to you the many ties which Nature gives to rivet the chain that binds the Shetlander to his home ; and so little can I make you acquainted with the many beauties which surrounded the home of Freddamann Unclus, and made it a paradise (albeit a northern one) to the fisherman's children, that I am fain to leave you to finish the picture for yourselves, while I go on with my story.

When supper-time came in Freddamann's cottage, there was quite a host of young Scandinavians to empty the porridge-pot. First there was Anderina, a blithe maiden of fourteen, then two big boys, Eric and Magnie ; then a quiet, silent, nine-year old named Inga, and her twin-brother Olaf ; then

curly-headed Freddamann (junior) and last of all, everybody's pet, May.

What a clatter of tongues, what a tumbling of foot-stools, what an endless buzzing about, what a general row there was in the hearty fisherman's home when he returned from a voyage to the sea, and all his bonnie bairns gathered about him to hear of his adventures and to seize upon his ocean treasures !

At such times mother never attempted to get in a word, and wise, too, for her soft voice would never have been heard amid the laughter, fun, and excitement going on. And yet there was nothing rude in the joy of the youngsters. Freddamann governed his household wisely and well, and consequently was loved by his children, as I wish all fathers were loved. Many and eager were the eyes that looked for his return from the deep-sea fishing, and many and joyous were the shouts that welcomed his home-coming. Many, too, were the anxious young hearts who offered up a prayer at night for the loved one on the ocean ; and morning's first word was, " Has father come ? "

The little house of Ordaal was unusually quiet one summer evening, and such a strange circumstance requires explanation. Only mother and tiny May were at home. Mother was tidying up in anticipation of her husband's return from the haaf. Anderina had gone to find a pony on the common. The two little boys were sailing ships on the loch. Eric and Magnie were off to the

fishing-station to meet father ; and little Inga was watching a flock of sheep, who seemed to have a strong desire to taste the tender young corn in the field, and which mother was as desirous they should *not* taste. Inga would have preferred a romp by the lake with her brothers ; but she did not dare to disobey mother, so went to her task in rather a sulky mood.

Slowly the evening came down, as if it were loth to tear the warm earth from the touch of day. Anderina returned with the pony ; Olaf and Fradie came back tired and ready for supper. A thick mist came down from the hills, and the little household were beginning to wax anxious and impatient, when a sound of merry voices reached their ears, and the next instant Freddamann entered, followed by his elder boys. All was fun and frolic then, for the arrival of the bread-winner was as the light of a new day on a night-bound world. His children clustered around him as was their wont ; and not until the first burst of their joy was over, did Fred-damann discover that one of his jewels was absent.

"Hollo ! where is little Inga ? What keeps my chickie, and I having such a fine shell in my pocket for her ?"

"Inga ?—yes, where is Inga ?" said little Olaf, who only then discovered why it was that he had felt so dull and lonely.

"Inga went to watch the corn-field," said mother. "I quite forgot to call her, and she maybe does not like to leave her charge till fetched."

"Inga was sulky," chimed in little Fradie, "and is maybe sulky still, and won't come."

"Inga! Inga!" called the thoughtful elder sister from the door; but only a passing gust of wind made reply.

"Run up to the knowe, boys," said the father, "and bring her in; the bairn will take cold with this heavy mist."

Off ran Eric, off ran Magnie, and faster than both scampered the twin-brother, shouting, calling, almost crying at last; but no Inga came.

Back in all haste they ran to report their ill luck; and the mother's cheek grew pale with some undefined fear, while a quick heart-throb leaped to the fisher's throat as he thought of the delicate child asleep on the damp, death-distilling earth, or her heedless feet straying to the brow of the adjacent cliff; and the mist hiding the danger; and a step too near—and a mouth less to fill, and a vacant place in the home circle.

The house was speedily emptied of its lately gathered inmates, who soon spread themselves about the little farm in search of the missing one. So thick was the mist, that one could not see an arm's length off; but the shouts and shrill cries might have waked a heavier sleeper than Inga; and so the farm was sought all over, and the hillocks and the sandy shore, and the child was nowhere to be found.

Then the before scarcely acknowledged fear found shape, and bitter tears fell, while dismal

forebodings found a place where so lately all had been joy and happiness.

Olaf's sorrow was something very touching to see. Unlike his quiet, gentle sister, he was full of wild fun and mischief; but, thoughtless as he was at times to others, to Inga he was ever the kind, protecting brother and companion. Not often was he away from her side, and bitterly did he upbraid himself for leaving her on this occasion, although it *was* for the purpose of launching a new schooner!

The whole neighbourhood was aroused, and lanterns were brought, and a large party set out to search for the lost child. Weary miles they walked in the blinding mist; over rock, and heath, and hill, and common; but no Inga came in answer to the loud calls which rang through the air for miles and miles.

At last morning came, and with the first gleam of sunlight every man and woman in the hamlet were out on the hills assisting in the vain search. Slowly the mist cleared away, and then Olaf and Fradie left the others and set out by themselves to look for their sister.

"I wish I had let her go with you to sail the ship," sobbed Olaf, "she wished so much to go."

"Do you think the Trows* can have taken her?" questioned Fradie in a frightened tone.

"I hope not, Fradie; I don't think they hurt people now."

* Trows, Shetland fairies.



"But mayn't they have taken her for something good?"

"Ah, but it hurts *us*," replied Olaf, quickly.

"And she was so pretty," continued Fradie.

"I will tell you what," said Olaf, stoutly; "if the Trows have anything to do with it, there is only one place where they can have taken her to, and that is the 'fairy ring.' We will go there and see, Fradie."

"But are you not frightened, Ole?"

"Tush! Trows never touch *men*; only babies and girls."

"Not boys, Ole?"

"Only very little boys, and then only those that look like girls."

"Am I like a girl?"

"No, Fradie, and I am not; so we will go to the fairy-ring, and find Inga."

Quite reassured, Fradie grasped his brother's hand, and both ran with all speed for the little dale where it was currently reported, and as currently believed, that the Trows held high revel during the silent hours of night.

But one was there before them. Freddamann stumbled by chance on the haunted (?) spot, and saw there what chilled the very life in the strong man's frame. He saw his little Inga crouching by a large stone, with her great eyes wildly opened, and staring with a strange, frightened look towards him. In the dim morning light, the father could only catch the outline of the face and figure,

THE CHANGELING.

and bounding forward, he clasped the child to his heart, then started back in horror, and held her at arm's length, and gazed into her face with a look as wild and wondering as her own. Surely *that* was not his bonnie bairn! There were the same big blue eyes and wavy brown hair; but there was a weary, haggard expression in this face that seemed to speak of years of trouble—such trouble as could never have made lines on a young face in one night. Not a bit of the soft pink of childhood was remaining—not a bit of its roundness and bloom. The mouth was closely shut, and the lips trembled continually; but Inga's little rosebud was wont to brim over with laughter and dimples. A most unsightly scar crossed the forehead and cheeks, which only last morning had been so spotless and fair; and yet the wound was not one of yesterday, for it had long since healed over. But the clothes were those of his child, although the face and figure, so pinched and shrunken, were none of hers; and full of fear and grief for he scarce knew what, the father turned to his companions, Eric and Magnie, and simply said, "Is this your sister?"

"Yes, yes! no, no! oh, no!" they cried together, then drew back in awe; for sure enough the dress was Inga's—the height, the colour of hair and eyes; but further than those all resemblance ceased.

Meantime the child never spoke a word, or took notice of anyone; she only gazed afar off with that



strange look, and shook her head uneasily when addressed.

More alarmed than he dared confess, Freddamann wrapped her in his coat, and carried her home, for he could not realize the fact that it was *not* Inga. But all doubt vanished when the mother emphatically declared this was *not* her child ; and the evening's sorrow was as nothing to that which morning had brought.

Little Fraddie boldly told his former fears of Trow-meddling, and, strange as it may seem to you who know that such things cannot be, the whole of the cottagers joined in the childish belief that Inga had been exchanged by the Trows for some elfish girl of their own.

It was a puzzling matter, certainly. Here was a child dressed in Inga's clothes ; like her yet not she ; Inga nowhere in the island ; this child in a locality where such a child was never seen or heard of before. Do you wonder that a simple and superstitious people seized upon those strange circumstances, and attributed the whole matter to invisible agency ? So firmly did the good fisherman and his family believe in the generally received solution of the mystery that it never occurred to them to inquire further into the matter ; and people who did not believe in the fact of the child being other than Inga, explained the thing by saying that the poor girl had been frightened, hurt, and her reason upset, through spending the night in a spot made awful by superstition. But notwithstanding

all that the more intelligent of their neighbours could say, Freddamann and his household continued to believe that the child was none of theirs. Yet it never once entered their heads to think of turning the changeling from their door. A part of their belief was, that as they treated the elfin child, so would their lost darling be treated by the Trows; therefore in all things the idiot girl took Inga's place,—in all things but in their hearts.

It was a very pitiful sight to look on the changeling, sitting on a footstool, heedless of all the efforts made to arouse her. Freddamann would bring home the treasures of the deep—the shells, and corals, and wondrous sea-gifts—and would sit patiently for hours with her on his lap, trying to wake some latent faculty. Anderina would try telling her stories, or the boys would bring their playthings, and attempt to lure her into joining in their sports; but it was all in vain. She would sit the whole day long by the fireside playing with her fingers, and gazing wearily and wildly far, far away. Her face never lost that sad and troubled expression, and her lips continually moved with a nervous motion; but no words came forth. Yet she was a gentle, tender child withal, and became endeared to the household for her very helplessness and imbecility, combined as they were with a certain wistful shrinking way she had of showing pain or sorrow. Then, too, her sad eyes seemed to speak to them of Inga, and to claim, in her name, some love and care; and so as time

went on the grief softened down ; the daily duties of the fisherman's household went on in their old way, and underneath the silent sorrow and resignation a hope lived which said, "you will see little Inga again."

One day, about a month after the changeling came, Olaf strayed away to the hill-side alone. He was not afraid to go to the fairy ring by himself, because he seemed to feel as if his darling sister were there ; and he would often go and sit by the big grey stone, and think about her, and wonder when it would be that she would come back. He felt very sure that she would come *some time*, and it made him so happy to picture that moment.

On this particular day, Olaf sat thinking so much of Inga, that at last he fell asleep ; and then he dreamt that she came to him, looking so bright and happy, and she told him how naughty she had been on that summer evening when her mother had told her to do one thing and she had wished to do another. But she said she had been punished, and now she was to come again and never be bad any more ; and she kissed Olaf's brow, and then he awoke, and went home with the soft happiness of his dream about him, almost expecting to see Inga there. Ah ! there was only the changeling by the fire, and Inga would not come until the other left.

So the summer months began to fade away, and the pleasant bustle of harvest time shed a ray of lighter thoughts upon the young hearts at Ordaal.

Very bright and modest did Anderina look, as she joined the reapers, dressed in a dark blue petticoat, snow-white jacket, and crimson 'kerchief, tied about her "bonnie brown hair." Only a very small bit of the home-shadow lay upon her pretty face. And very boisterously happy were Eric and Magnie as they ran from group to group, binding the sheaves, and standing them in clusters of twos and threes. They had almost forgot about the "skeleton in the house."

Altogether forgetful were Fradie and May, as they romped among the workers, and pricked their little bare feet with the hard stubble, and then were borne to the smooth grass on father's shoulder. Only Olaf and his parents could not for one moment forget the changeling by the hearthstone, and the departed Inga.

And so the mellow harvest came, and faded, and died away on "Hallowmas E'en."

Despite their recent affliction, the family at Ordaal determined to observe the autumn festival as on former occasions. Wisely enough, Freddamann judged that it would scarcely be right to check his children's mirth for the sake of that one blight-spot. His heart, and the mother's heart, would never cease to yearn after the lost lambkin; but he could not bear that the blithe spirits of youth and innocence should brood over a grief, and make it (as he could not help doing) a part of their lives.

Eric and Magnie were very busy for a week preparing for "Hallow E'en." They had to make

their tall straw hats, which tasked their utmost ingenuity in the matter of variety in form and decoration ; and they had to plan so many things, that altogether their heads became quite giddy with such a weight of business, and the house was uncommonly quiet.

At last Hallowmas time came round, and it would have puzzled you very much to have told what manner of beings those were who kept flitting among the hamlets after dusk. For the most part they were dressed in snowy robes, golden-coloured caps, and brilliant ribbon decorations. At one time you would meet a party of six, about your own size if you chance to be somewhere near fourteen years of age ; but I do not think, unless you are very ugly indeed, that you would have been able to detect any resemblance between your own face and those hideous masks worn by the unknown. By and by a fairy-like set of tiny creatures, perhaps numbering a score, will *shimmer* past, with gauzy veils shrouding pretty faces, and graceful head-dresses of plaited straw, glittering in the uncertain light as if they were veritable golden crowns. Again, like shadows, will fly past one, two, three, four tall, gaunt spectres, whose eerie screeches and grotesque antics might even scare the yellow Dwarf himself.

As Hallowmas is the time when fairies and Trows come out for a space to enjoy a short-lived freedom, you may believe that these phantoms you have seen are the unearthly visitants ; but if you

do not like to take that version of it, I will tell you that those are the Greulics* (or masqueraders) who go about at Hallowmas time. Very harmless creatures they are. One of the party carries a bag, and they go from house to house soliciting morsels of bread, or cake, or butter, tea, meat, pence. When they have collected enough to make a comfortable meal for their own party, they adjourn to the home of some one of their number, and finish up the evening's fun with a hearty feast and indoor games.

In vain did Eric and Magnie entreat of Olaf to join their party. The little fellow could only think of last Hallowmas, when Inga and he had such fun dressing-up and trotting from place to place, themselves making a tiny party of two. So instead of joining the Greulics, Olaf sat quietly at home, and looked after the idiot girl.

They had all given her the name of Fairy, for they could not speak of the changeling as Inga ; and Fairy was unusually restless this Hallow E'en, and kept looking from face to face, as if in search of some one. Olaf could not help fancying that she seemed to comprehend what he said to her once ; and when a "set" of Greulics came in, he observed that her face became lightened by a ray of intelligence, which he had never seen there before. This encouraged Olaf to try more and more to win something like human reason from her, and although she relapsed into her former listlessness, he never forgot that moment of intelligence, and

* From the Icelandic "Grylun, a bugbear to frighten children."

patiently set himself to the task of winning back her faded faculties.

Hallowmas day is the 1st of November, and about the middle of that month there came a very heavy fall of snow. For days and days it fell in blinding showers, and there was no going out of doors at all.

Anderina's knitting-needles did great execution during those stormy days; and mother's spinning-wheel went buzzing on continually, and the soft wool came off the rollers in thread, which Fradie's fingers soon converted into mittens for father. Fradie was a very manly little fellow, although he could knit. He never liked to be idle, but tried to help in every possible way. He could knit comforters, and mittens, and socks, and even caps, and that was a great deal for a little boy to do. Then, since Inga went, Olaf had taken all her little duties. He washed the dishes, and swept the hearth, and ran messages for mother, and looked after May, and tended poor Fairy with almost the tender watchfulness with which he had guarded his twin sister. Yet I do not think you would anywhere have seen two braver boys than Olaf and Fradie. They could fight when challenged as boldly as any English boy, indeed I think that Fradie rather enjoyed a good boxing match.

In those long winter days that I talked about when the snow fell so heavily, and the sun went down at three o'clock—having only risen with a shiver at nine, and shivered crossly a bit above




the hill for four or six hours—in those dismal days it looked very snug in Freddaman's house. There was no fishing to be done, and the father sat by the fire cobbling a pair of shoes for little May, while his two elder boys were busily engaged in weaving straw ropes and peat keshies (strawbaskets).

Sometimes Anderina would sing a pretty Norse song, or mother would tell a weird tale of olden times ; but sweeter than either was the music of little May's voice when she repeated her hymns and Bible verses.

You must not think it an impossibility for piety and superstition to dwell together. The history of your own island will tell you that ; and if you know that Shetland is half a century behind England in civilization ! you will not wonder at the fairy child being received as a fairy hostage in a house where the Bible was read and known.

Pleasant indeed were those dark snowy days at Ordaal ; and when at last the storm abated, it was almost with regret that blue sky and bracing frost-winds were received by the fisherman's family. All wished those snug times back,—all but Eric and Magnie ; and joyous and eager were the two lads when they looked down upon the broad lake, and saw it covered with one vast sheet of substantial ice. Oh ! what glorious times they had sliding for miles up the long sheltered loch, visiting the little holms, frightening away the wild-duck from their shelter, erecting snow-caves by the shore, and stationing



white sentinels all over the loch ; rolling great balls down the hill, and dancing on the impenetrable ice with a joyous consciousness of its stability. Rare times those were for Eric and Magnie, and often in long after years did they think of the pleasant life in the old home. You may imagine how sorry they felt when the thaw began, and how eagerly they watched it making inroads upon their "happy hunting grounds."

At last it became dangerous to walk on the ice, and then Freddamann prohibited his children from venturing thereon.

One day at this time mother required some message to be brought from a distant part of the island ; and thinking the weather too rough for Anderina, she sent Eric and Magnie instead. Wrapping them warmly up, and giving them instructions how to act, the good mother sent the boys on their errand. They walked down to the loch, and taking the footpath by its margin, they briskly set out for their walk. But by-and-by a wicked thought came into Magnie's head, "What was the use of going all round when the ice looked so firm ? why not cross the loch and save so much walking ?" Ay, why not ? just because father had forbidden it. Still the naughty thought would come, and instead of putting it away Magnie imparted it to Eric.

"No, no !" said the elder brother stoutly, "father said we must not, and you dare not disobey him."

"Don't I?" said Magnie; "see if I won't! Father does not know how strong the ice is *here*."

"No, Magnie, you must not go."

"I'll *try*, at any rate!" And without a moment's pause or thought, off bounded the thoughtless boy.

A few yards he went safely enough; then crack! crack! went the ice, and down went Magnie into the black water below.

Only for a moment did he disappear. Soon his head came up, and grasping at the jagged ice, he tried to raise himself again, but it was a vain effort; the piece he grasped broke off, and once more he went down. Again and again he rose and struggled, and fell back; and Eric who had been shrieking for help with all his might, could stand the sight no longer but sprang forward to save him. At each step he took the frail floor gave way; but so lightly did his feet bound over the ice, that there was no time for the yawning gulfs which his foot-prints made to suck him down.

He was soon by his brother's side, and dashing into the widened gap, he seized Magnie by the arm, and bore him up as he was sinking into unconsciousness.

Help was not far off now. Freddamann had heard the cries of Eric, and running to the door had beheld the whole.

It was the act of a minute or two for the brave father to run down the hill, and reach the scene of the disaster by an ice-path almost as dangerous as that which Eric, had chosen. He grasped hold

of Eric (who still held firmly to his brother), and battled his way to the shore, through the broken and jagged ice, through the bubbling water, and at last, breathless and exhausted, to the safe, safe land. Then Freddamann lifted Magnie, who was insensible, in his arms, and, followed by Eric, he hurried home.

Magnie did not recover for a long time; but such a lesson had he learned, that he never ventured to disobey his father again.

Meantime, the winter passed slowly away, and to Olaf's joy the changeling began to show very evident signs of improvement. She would nod when she meant "Yes," and smile when pleased. She would follow the children's gambols with evident interest, and showed a marked preference in her likes and dislikes. Olaf was much delighted with his success, and thought that all his good efforts brought him nearer to Inga.

In the early spring, Eric asked his father to allow him to go away to sea. Not as a fisher-boy in a tiny boat, but to go away in a great ship, and as a veritable sailor-lad, sailing all about the world and making a fortune, and coming back (some day) a famous rich man. It grieved Freddamann to think of his boy tossing about the ocean, and getting hardened, perhaps, by vice, and absence from all home-ties and softening influences, but when he remembered the many dependent on his own life, and how uncertain that life was, Freddamann felt that he had no right to debar his son

from carving out his own future. Mother and Anderina were very sure that no harm would come to Eric, for he was a good son and brother; and so they packed up a little box full of things, and with tears and prayers, hopes and smiles, they sent their sailor out upon his travels.

Magnie moped when his constant companion left, and Freddaman, pitying his loneliness, took the boy with him when he went to the fishing, so Ordaal became very quiet indeed, for Olaf was more silent than heretofore, and Inga was away, and Eric and Magnie were absent, and little Fradie said that he and May would have to become twice as noisy to make up for the others.

It was quite a treat for Olaf to be sent on a message, for everybody was so busy at home that he had no one to talk to. He missed Inga's companionship more and more, and now that the spring was come, and she had not returned, he began to feel sad and despairing. The house did not seem itself without Inga, so he was glad to get away from it and run over the wild hills to watch the big waves sporting with the rocks, and to think of the dear sister he had lost so strangely. He never went out that he did not expect to meet her coming back, and it was always as some radiant spirit or lovely fairy that he pictured her,—but Inga did not come.

How pleasant it was one fine spring day when mother sent Olaf over the hill to bring an expected letter of Eric's from the post office! Olaf had to



go some three or four miles, but he did not mind that, and he had May for company and Fairy too. The poor girl had become wonderfully attached to Olaf, and always seemed so uneasy in his absence that he generally took her with him in his peregrinations. It was a sweet sunny afternoon, and the children loitered by the way, plucking wild flowers and playing games, so that the sun was going down by the time they reached the post-office. Eric's letter was there, and in high spirits the trio turned to retrace their steps. But the sun in going to bed had taken all the pleasant light and warm breezes with him, and it became quite cold, dark, and stormy before the little folks had got very far. But they chattered away very briskly, and hurried on, and—lost their way! May felt a little frightened at first, but Olaf was quite brave, and that reassured the little girl, who ran on beside her brother with a very courageous heart. They were trying to find the proper way, and were walking hand in hand, when all three stumbled and fell down—down somewhere. They were a little stunned at first, but on recovering, Olaf looked about him and could see nothing, it was so dark. Only a good way above his head he saw a gleam of light, and at once he understood the whole matter. They had fallen into the "Wild Man's Hole." Often, often had Olaf heard of that pit in the hill; of its being haunted by wicked Trows, and the spirits of those who had perished in it. He knew that its opening was unguarded, and easily

stumbled over by those who were not well acquainted with its locality. He knew that its arched roof was higher than a man could reach, and he knew that it would be the last place where anyone would search for them, being as it was so entirely away from any frequented path. Yet Olaf did not lose heart or cry, he gathered his little sister and Fairy within his arms and tried to comfort them. They could not see each other's faces, but they heard Olaf's voice, and that cheered them. "When *will* father come?" said May. "Soon, I hope, dear!" But Olaf's trembling accents betrayed how doubtful he felt. Hours and hours passed, the darkness became more and more intense, and at last, worn out with fear and crying, the girls fell asleep.

I cannot tell you how miserable Olaf felt then. He did not weep or despair, but his busy brain kept thinking over all the dreadful stories connected with the Wild Man's Hole, and it required all his pluck and childish piety to withstand the flood of horror which came rushing over him at times, and making his senses reel with terror and affright. By-and-bye a faint streak of light fell from the opening overhead, and at that instant a lark sprang up from the heather near, and burst forth with a morning hymn. The sweet sound awoke May, who starting up, looked with bewilderment around her. She remembered it all at last, and cowering down beside Olaf, she whispered softly, "Let us say our prayers." They knelt together on the damp mould,



and folding their little hands they repeated the "Lord's Prayer." A wonderful feeling of peace and trust came over Olaf then. All his midnight fears fled away, and his morning anthem went up to heaven with the skylark's song. While kneeling so, a thought came to Olaf, "What if I could lift May high enough, she might get out, and go and tell!" Up he sprang to his feet and made the attempt, but though little May stretched her arms very far, and Olaf staggered with the effort he made, it was all in vain. Still the idea was too good a one to reject altogether, and following it up, Olaf thought, "If I could make a mound of the loose earth it might be done." You see he was a brave boy, and not to be overcome by difficulties; so he set to work with all his strength to collect the earth. May helped him for a time, but then she cut her hand with a sharp stone, so went and sat by Fairy, who was staring at Olaf in great amazement. His nails were split (you know what a sore thing *that* is), and his skin was torn in many places. He was faint from hunger and want of sleep, but Olaf worked on, and on, and at last he had raised a large mound half as high as himself, and trembling with excitement he called to May to come and try. She got on to his back, and then slowly and carefully climbed to his shoulder, then swaying gently to keep her balance, May rose gradually upright, and—oh! joy—grasped easily and well the mouth of the pit. She then leant on her elbows, thus relieving Olaf of her weight, who put his hands on


the soles of her feet, and helped her still higher. In another moment May stood on the russet heath with the light of day shining purely on her golden locks. Olaf gave a great shout of joy when he saw the success of his plan. Run now ; run, May, and tell anyone you meet to come and find us in the "Wild Man's Hole." Off ran May as fast as her tiny legs could carry her, and Olaf danced, and hugged the changeling in the height of his excitement.

A dismal night it had been for Freddamann and the others, but all was joy and bustle when little May burst in exclaiming, "In the Wild Man's Hole! Ole and Fairy in the Wild Man's Hole!" Freddamann did not wait to ask questions, but leaving May to her mother, he went with the rest to look for Olaf and Fairy.

It was a joyful moment to good, brave, patient Olaf when he heard his father's voice calling to him, and when a rope was lowered, he made all haste to tie it about Fairy and himself. What a delicious feeling it was, being lifted from the earth and borne up, up into the glad day!

Freddamann carried Fairy home, and Olaf walked by his side, just as they had done on that sad morning when the changeling was found. When Olaf ran to his mother's arms, he exclaimed, "I did not cry a bit, mother." Bold boy!

Although this adventure did not harm Olaf nor little May, yet Fairy seemed to have felt the fright acutely, and it left such sad effects upon her body



and spirit, that Olaf again despaired of reclaiming her. Once more she sat silently by the hearth, with a troubled shadow on her brow and a wearied longing in her eyes ; and although the long summer days had come, and the sweet summer breezes, and the summer bustle, and the summer happiness, yet all the light and joy fell *around* but never upon Fairy. Meantime the little ones grew big and strong ; Anderina bloomed into as sweet a maiden as ever the summer helped to expand, and letters came from Eric, full of ocean tales and sailor fun. The boy was getting on well, and therefore it was with much surprise that his friends received the announcement of his intention of returning home almost as soon as the letter which bore the news. Although full of wonder, they never dreamt that Eric must have a good reason for his sudden change of plans, and therefore prepared to receive their sailor with all joy and festivity. Shall I tell *you* why Eric wished to go home so unexpectedly ?

One day when he had returned to Liverpool from a voyage, and was wandering lazily about the streets, peering into the shop windows, he heard a faint scream close at hand, and looking around, he saw a big, ragged, cowardly fellow striking a tiny girl who shrank with terror from the uplifted hand. Eric thought of his sisters, gentle and tender, and the hot northern blood rushed to the boy's forehead as he beheld the villainous assault. Just as he had rushed into the

ice-clad lake to save his brother, so did Eric now spring forward to rescue from such brutal treatment—*his sister!* Yes his very own sister, little Inga, so long lost, so strangely found. She recognized him the moment that her eye fell upon his face, and he knew his sister that instant too. Eric caught her up in his arms, never asking how she came to be in that city, nor ever questioning the fact of her identity with the cherished darling so wonderfully lost by the haunted valley in the old island far away. When Eric at last turned to seek an explanation from the man who had been with Inga, the ruffian had decamped, and in his place had gathered a little crowd, whose curiosity had been strongly excited at beholding the meeting between the brother and sister. One of the circle who surrounded them was a richly clad young lady, who gazed on the pretty girl and her sailor brother with a look of no common interest. Observing how bewildered they seemed, she spoke to them in a gentle, cheery voice, and then led them to her home. There Inga told her new friend and Eric of her year's adventures. On that night when she was out on the hill alone, Inga said, that losing her way in the mist, she was dreadfully alarmed at finding herself in the Trow-haunted dale, and would have wandered any length rather than have remained there a moment. She was just turning to leave the "uncanny place" when she met a man and woman, who were followed by a girl of her own age. Inga, full of childhood's

trustfulness, addressed these people, and telling them she had lost her way, begged of them to show her home, or let her accompany them to some human habitation. The man was a pedlar (or tramp) of the very lowest degree, and with his wife and child was crossing the island on his way to a southern port. A wicked thought entered this man's head as he looked at the lovely Inga and thought how her fair face and pleading gestures might bring many half-pence to his purse if only she belonged to him.

Some such idea was passing through his wife's brain as well, while she listened to Inga's tales of the mystic circle in the dale ; of the spiteful Trows, and their tricks ; of changeling children and dismal doings. Quickly they seized the hapless child. They stripped her of all her clothes, and without one spark of feeling for their own imbecile daughter, they arrayed Inga in the idiot's rags. Having made this exchange, they next proceeded to place their child within the fairy ring, and after using some terrible threats (which indeed, seemed all she could comprehend) if she dared to move from the spot, they hurried away, bearing the trembling Inga with them. By threats, blows and such-like pleasant means, they compelled Inga to keep silent nor ask for help anywhere, and in their begging and other expeditions Inga won (literally) golden gifts and opinions, and the worthy couple no doubt congratulated each other on the success of their impromptu exchange of children. Yes!

they had made a very good job of it. They had rid themselves of an ugly idiot daughter who was nothing but an irksome burden to them, and they had gained one who could help them in many lucrative ways, but Inga turned out a losing business in the end, for, on her account they had to leave Britain for the Colonies in a manner scarcely agreeable to their feelings as free-born Scots.

But Inga was safe now,—safe within the shelter of her brave brother's arm, and the care of her new friend. Miss Mosely was so charmed with Inga's little romance that she determined on seeing the end of it, so set sail for Shetland with Eric, Inga, and Mr Mosely, (who indulged his only child to an alarming degree).

And *this* was how it came about that sailor Eric was to return home at some unknown time and for some unknown reason.

But something sorrowful and strange was going on in Ordaal at this time. Little Fairy was fading away. She had never recovered from the effects of that night spent in the Wild Man's Hole. The cold, damp earth, the fright and the chilling sleep, had done their work on a previously shattered frame, and Fairy was preparing to lay down her weary burden for a bright hereafter. A very weary burden indeed had the life of the poor changeling been, and no wonder that all who watched her dying said, "It is best so." It seemed as if the cloud were lifted from her reason at times in those last days, for she spoke some words,

smiled often, and was quite patient and obedient to those about her. Olaf tended Fairy with affection, and at last when it seemed that she was about to wake to a fairer life the boy kissed her cheek, and whispered in her ear, "send little Inga to us." Fairy smiled, nodded her head, then shut her eyes and went away.

I do not know that any one *expected* that some strange event would happen after this. They thought they would not be *surprised* if Inga were to come again, but somehow they scarcely looked for that as a certainty, but they made a tiny grave for the idiot girl within the charmed circle, and they *said* it was only because Olaf had asked that Fairy might be buried there. Fairy was laid there on the anniversary of the day on which she was found, and in the soft summer evening Olaf came to look at the grave, and to think sadly of his lost sister. Very quietly he sat him down, and by-and-by his thoughts went off into dreams, for lying there on the pleasant grass with sweet winds blowing over him and murmuring billows close by, Olaf went to sleep. And while he slept there came dainty feet across the fairy ring—a lady and a little child. On catching sight of Olaf they retreated behind an adjacent crag, where Mr Mosely and Eric were snugly ensconced. "How funny," said Eric, "that Olaf should be here; but all the better, we can have more fun now." You see those four conspirators had made it up that they should arrive on that very day, and that

they should first proceed to the haunted valley, and Inga was to be stationed by the fairy ring. The lady and gentleman were to hide close at hand, and Eric was to go home, and after the "kissing and fuss" were over he was to bring them all to the valley, on the pretence of it being the anniversary of the day that Inga was taken away. They had dressed the little girl in very fairy-like-robos; a white frock with blue ribbons, and a crown of flowers. Tears were in little Inga's eyes as, stepping lightly forward, she leant over Olaf and kissed his cheek. The boy's eyes were opened very wide,—and wider still—for before him stood the very Inga of his dreams. The floating dress of glittering white and the dazzling flowers, such as never lived below the sky of Shetland, were surely unearthly gifts, but then those locks of chestnut hair were Inga's, and Inga's own self was that dainty creature who flung her arms about his neck and gave him a most *un*ethereal hug. Yes, only Inga could laugh, and dance, and kiss, and cry about Olaf in that fashion, and only Inga could make him feel so happy. But now the others stepped forward, for a new plan was to be carried out, and a very few words served to show the quick-witted Olaf what he was called upon to do.

A very quiet circle were gathered about the hearth at Ordaal. They had all come to love little Fairy; and besides, death always sets folk thinking seriously, but thought was cast to the winds when Olaf burst into the house, radiant with



joy, and called them all to come, haste to the fairy ring. Scarce knowing what to expect, the astonished household followed the boy, who would only answer "come and see!" to the many questions asked. And they *did* come, and they *did* see. Little Inga stood beside the changeling's grave, and so like a veritable fairy did she seem, that it was some time before her friends could be made to believe that Inga was not, in truth, a gift returned from fairy-land. The whole matter was fully explained at last, and very silly the good folk looked when they discovered that no supernatural agency had been at work, and I daresay if other people would try to discover the meanings of many things that look inexplicable, they would find that seemingly mysterious circumstances would prove to be very commonplace and very *earthly* events. You may be sure that there was much rejoicing that night at Ordaal. The re-united family gathered about the old home fireside, and there I think we may leave them, because perhaps as the years go by, some partings come, or some sorrow spreads its wings over the happy household, and we had best not know them when the bloom of pure sweet youth has been brushed away and the guileless innocence of childhood is past.

AMONG THE ROCKS.

WHEN a real story is a good one it seems quite a shame to add to, or take from, its actual facts ; and as truth is always more beautiful as well as more strange than fiction, I will simply "tell the tale as it was told to me."

Tourists who visit Shetland are invariably directed to explore Burrafirth, in the island of Unst, as one of the principal "lions" of the country. It is, in truth, a beautiful scene, and well worthy of all the praise which has been bestowed upon it. The Firth (or more correctly Fiord) runs a long way inland. It is walled on either side by cliffs of the most grand and varied beauty, and terminates in a broad sheet of pure and glittering sand. The Firth faces directly north, and when you stand upon that white shore you look out to the far horizon with not a speck of land to break the vast heaving expanse of ocean, whose waves roll in unbroken might upon the sand at your feet. On your right hand abruptly rise the great rocks ; and on your left you see a cluster of neat buildings, which have been erected for the use of the keepers belonging to the Fluggaskerry lighthouse. There is a small thatched cottage nestling under the hill, and almost

unobservable beside the trim new government houses; but I do not think you will meet one individual who will not be able to say that when he visited Burrafirth he partook of such hospitality beneath *that* roof as could only have been bestowed upon him by a descendant of the Norsemen.


One stormy day in November, a few years ago, the inhabitants of Burrafirth were painfully surprised at beholding a small schooner beating about the mouth of the harbour with the evident intention of entering it. The sea was in one mad whirl of anger, and the wind was coming down in hurricane gusts from the high land. To the Shetlanders it seemed an act of insanity for any vessel to attempt putting up in such a place as the Firth, where even in a summer breeze the choice lay between stranding upon the sand or going to pieces among the rocks. Indeed, the storm was so vehement that no boat could be launched, and as there were no other means of warning the unlucky ship of her danger, the spectators could only watch, with sorrowful interest, the movements of the angry ocean and its victim. Magnus Winwick, the occupant of the cottage of which I spoke, and an experienced seaman, expressed his fears that if the vessel did not speedily put out to sea again she would ere long meet her fate upon one or other of the rocky sides of the Firth, and while a ray of daylight remained the good old man lingered upon the shore watching the bark. At last the sickly light expired altogether, shutting out from view the schooner

and her foe ; and heaving a sigh at the thought of what might be the doom of those on the sea, Magnus retired to his home.

The bright peat fire was throwing out its cheerful blaze, and the tale and the talk of the hearth were bidding the evening speed lightly, when Magnus and his family were startled by a strange apparition in the doorway. A sailor lad, pale and terror-stricken, half-clad, and dripping wet, stood upon the threshold mutely pointing towards the sea. Magnus sprang to his feet with all the agility of youth, and eagerly questioned the boy, but he was a foreigner, and did not understand one word of what was said. Still he kept pointing seawards, and then to the boat which lay upon the beach, and could be dimly discerned through the flickering moonlight. The universal language was easily understood, although the Norwegian dialect had become a strange tongue to the Shetland ears. Followed by his son, and shortly afterwards by a brave crew of picked men, Magnus entered his boat and rowed out in the direction indicated by the stranger, who, of course, accompanied the devoted band of volunteers. The storm had subsided very much, but notwithstanding, it was a perilous adventure ; one which none but bold, high-hearted men could have undertaken, and but for *one* object—the saving of human life. Gallantly did the little boat strike out amid the seething waves, and still the boy pointed further and further. After having pulled along shore for a mile or two, the stranger lad's excitement became so intense

that all felt assured that they were nearing the scene of some terrible disaster ; and when at last he drew their attention to some small detached rocks, calling aloud at the same time, Magnus knew that his fears were too truly verified, and that the hapless schooner had perished there. The Shetlanders stood up in their boat and shouted lustily, and you may guess their delight when they heard a voice make answer. They rescued a sailor, more dead than alive, from the precarious refuge he had found upon a low crag. He spoke to them in broken English ; all else had perished. The top masts of the schooner could be seen amid the fretted surf, and so near to the land had she gone down that it needed no words to tell how the agile boy had escaped. The storm was again increasing, but Magnus lingered in that dangerous locality, lest perchance some other sailor had managed to reach the safety of the rocks. Again and again he shouted, but received no answer ; again and again the boat rowed round the fatal spot, but no living thing was there ; at last the danger to the frail skiff became so imminent that the reluctant signal to return was given, and the brave islanders put back towards their homes, with the rescued.

On reaching the land all were so exhausted that they were glad to follow the example of their unfortunate guests, and retire to rest ; and after such great exertion, and so noble a feat, you will not wonder that sweetest slumbers soon visited their eyes. But the first watches of the night had



scarcely past when Magnus Winwick awoke from his sleep, for it seemed as if a voice had whispered in his ear, "What if some poor wretch had found a footing on the low and slippery cliffs? What if he were clinging there still in all the agony of despair, yet with that instinct of self-preservation which is loth to leave a man? What if the cruel sea were washing his limbs, and heaving and yawning around him, like some horrid monster after its prey? What if the rising tide were even *then* bidding him trust no longer to the refuge he had almost deemed secure? What if weary eyes were longing for morning to bring rescue from impending doom? What if tired arms were refusing to do their work, and a wave-worn mariner were sinking back to the grave he had so lately hoped to evade?" Had some invisible friend of the friendless in deed spoken these things? It almost seemed so. For although Magnus tried to attribute it to an excited imagination, he could not rest, and at last sleep and quiet were altogether banished from his pillow, and rising from his bed he hurried to awake his son and impart to him the anxious thoughts that were seething in the father's brain.

With dawn of day the two emerged from their cottage for a walk along the brow of the cliffs. The storm had almost abated, and the pleasant light was slowly touching the hill tops. A few minutes' walk brought them near to the scene of yesterday's tragedy, and looking down from the high land where they stood, the men could see



the schooner lying, a forlorn wreck, amid the water. Magnus Winwick gazed mournfully upon the dismal picture—the cruel pointed rocks which held the ship as in a vice—the network of seaweeds already



HORN OF PA-PA AND VAR SKERRIES.

weaving themselves into a shroud for the buried bark—the bits of floating wreck which spoke so sadly of man's handiwork, of man's weakness, of

Nature's power and Nature's God. All these things were noted by the observant Shetlander, whose heart had early learned to interpret "earth's many voices" aright. It was only for a short time that Magnus allowed himself to forget the main object which had brought him there. His son was already clambering among the rocks, and shouting loudly in the forlorn hope that some human ear might not yet be too deaf to hearken. The old man joined his voice to that of the lad, and the "wild hallo" rang through the air, rising above the sound of wind or wave, and echoing among the adjacent caverns. Was it *echo* alone answered? Surely their lusty voices never woke such a shrill cry of transport, hope, and joy as came ringing back from those sombre cliffs. "Hark! was not that some one?" and the two stood silent and listening for a moment. Just once they repeated the call, and this time there could be no mistake; from far away, and faint, the cry came, but it *was* a human voice that spoke, and, peering down over the face of the rock Magnus saw a man upon one of the detached crags. Waiting only so long as to make the poor fellow understand that he was discovered, and would speedily be rescued, the men hurried back to their home, launched a boat, and brought the perishing sailor to their hospitable cottage. This man had been the mate of the schooner. He was a handsome Norwegian, in the prime of life; could speak English well, and gave Magnus all details of the shipwreck.



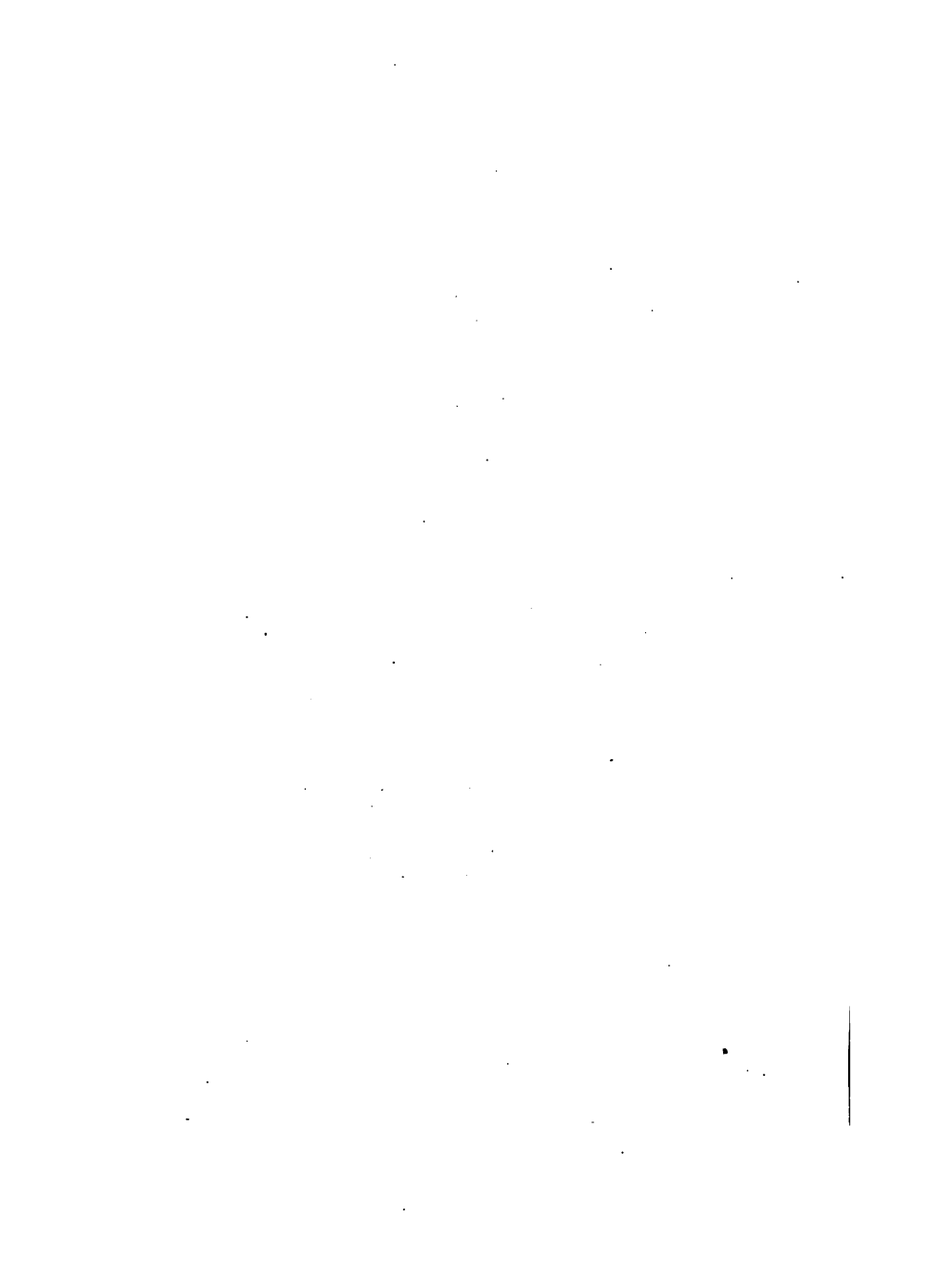
A gust of wind caught the vessel when she was close to the land, and when she struck, the captain had jumped overboard and made for the land. But good swimmer as he was, the all-powerful ocean had borne him down, and he had perished before the eyes of his mate. The latter acted with more coolness. The masts of the schooner were leaning towards the land, and as the ship slowly settled down among the breakers the man crawled along the main mast, fastened one of its ropes around his waist, and, taking a desperate leap, gained the rocks. One glance told him that what he supposed to be the main land was nothing more than a detached rock, but in that same moment he learned that all immediate danger was over, for climbing upwards he came to a patch of fresh green earth, and then he dropped down insensible. How long he remained in that state he could not tell. It seemed like ages, and doubtless it was owing to *that* that he was undiscovered when the boat visited the spot. He had scarcely any clothing on, and that little was of course soaked with salt water. At last he had awaked from that first stupor, for he remembered having pulled some withered grass and eaten it to allay the gnawing hunger which oppressed him, and thus the night had worn away—a night which had seemed to him like many days and weeks. He wakened and slept again and again, and had evidently fallen into that state of apathy which brings death to the luckless adventurer, when the voices of Magnus

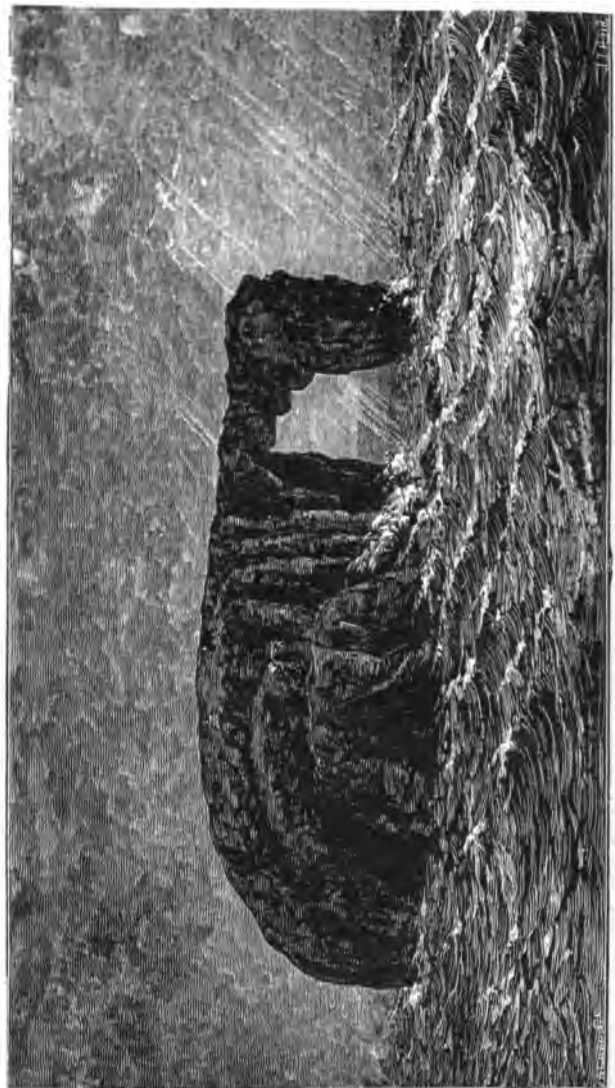
and his son came like angel-music to break the spells which held him. He said that no words could ever express the feelings which came over him when he heard the sound of human voices. At first they came to him in dreams like heavenly strains, and after that he awoke and knew that his fellow man was near, and rescue from certain death at hand.

There is a terrible superstition prevalent in Shetland. It is held as a matter of firm belief by many that he who is chiefly instrumental in saving a drowning man from his fate will assuredly die within a year of that time. Sad indeed am I to record the strange coincidence which took place after these events at Burrafirth—I mean a coincidence which would unhappily confirm the creed which the ignorant hold.

Ere the spring birds had come back to their summer haunts among the cliffs of his native land—ere his ripe old age had fallen into autumn's "sere and yellow leaf"—Magnus Winwick was suddenly and unexpectedly taken home to his resting-place in the bosom of mother-earth, and Burrafirth lost in him its hospitable entertainer, its intelligent guide, and its ablest and most experienced seaman.







DORE HOLM—NEAR TANGWICH, NORTH MAVIN.

THE BROTHER'S SACRIFICE.

"WHO would ever have supposed that Britta Ingster would marry again?"

"You don't mean to say she is going to have the knot tied a second time!"

"Yes, to be sure, and to an old sweetheart too."

"Oh! I am quite horrified; I shall never care to go near her cottage again."

"Well! I don't wonder you are astonished; after the show of grief she made when poor Magnie died—silly creature!"

"Ah! sister mine, sentiment goes for nothing among the poor."

So spoke the Laird's thoughtless young daughters, and so they judged their humble protégé without a hearing. They dreamt not (in their home of wealth and happiness) of the cruel necessity which had driven the widow so soon to forget her early love, else they might have been less hasty in uttering such decided opinions.

It was a clear frosty day, three winters previous, when Magnie Ingster led from the church his youthful bride, and a handsomer, happier couple you could not have wished to see. Their little cottage by the sea was the picture of comfort and

neatness, and a bright future seemed opening before them. But I have seen when the sky was at its fairest, and the sun unclouded, without a warning the thunder came, and the lightning flashed, and all Nature bent before the unexpected hurricane; and thus it was that Britta's horizon became overcast.

Magnie was a fisherman, and when the summer came he was the first out, and the last to return from the haaf. One fair morning in June, he left his home for his usual voyage seaward in search of a livelihood. Many of his fellow-countrymen went as well, for the day was clear and promising. Some returned, some the ocean kept.

Three weary days and nights poor Britta watched on the cold gray cliffs for a sight of the sail she knew so well, but it never came, and on the fourth day the sympathizing neighbours found, and led back to her desolate home, the wife of half-a-year; the widow at twenty-one. Her grief, as may be supposed, was wild and deep, for the bond which united her to Magnie was no common one. They had been cousins and playmates in early childhood, orphans and lovers in youth, and their affection had so grown with their lives, and been so openly acknowledged to the world, that it would have been a matter of wonder to everybody, and an impossibility in their own eyes, if either had chanced to marry any one else.

I don't think Britta would ever have borne up under such a blow, if it had not been that some-



thing of Magnie was left for her to love and live for. A few months after her bridegroom's death, a little boy was born to the disconsolate widow. Scalding tears and bitter sighs were all that greeted the little stranger *at first*. A crushed and bleeding heart sent up its wail to Heaven in answer to the first cry of the orphan boy; but when the helpless baby was laid on his mother's arm, and his large blue eyes looked up to her face, as if they held in their wondrous depths a message from the sea—when she saw in those wandering orbs a fancied resemblance to those whose light had so lately been quenched by the ocean, all her woman's wealth of love and devotion went out in a great gush of passion to her dead husband's child, and thanking God for His precious gift, Britta inwardly resolved to rise above her afflictions, and to live for the sake of "Magnie's boy."

Of course the little one was named after his father, and people wondered to see what a stout merry little fellow he became. No shadow of the dark events that had heralded his birth had fallen on that bright young brow. His mother's face seemed as if it had forgotten how to smile, while her thin and stooping figure bespoke a hard struggle with poverty and a breaking heart; but no reflection from her pale features dwelt on the sunny face of her little son. No wonder Britta's heart held him so close; no wonder her life became bound up in the lad's.

At the time of her happy marriage, her husband

had obtained from an indulgent landlord, a long lease of the cottage in which the brief period of their wedded life was spent. To pay the rent and retain the home which *he* had provided for her, and which held so many tender associations, was the great ambition of Britta's life ; but hard times came when there was no fish on the coast, and no corn or potatoes in the field, and Britta had often to send her little boy supperless to bed, while she sat till the small hours plying her knitting needles, the produce of which was all she had to depend on for to-morrow's dinner. She worked hard and long, and never murmured, but she could not keep the wolf from the door ; and his gaunt visage as he stared upon her, threatening the rosy cherub at her knee, seemed too hideous to look upon and live. She had no relations, and her neighbours had enough troubles of their own this season ; besides, Britta was modest and sensitive, and she could not bear to parade her poverty before the eyes of her kind but rude-minded neighbours ; and as little could the grateful woman venture to tell her sufferings to the gay but warm-hearted ladies, who came sometimes to see her and play with little Magnie. Their casual visit and hasty glances did not read the inner life of the widow Britta, and her pride shrank from appearing to beg from the daughters of a landlord kind and forbearing enough, but sadly deficient in that care (for the poor of his tenantry), which is not satisfied to *speak* but *act* his sympathy. Oh ! young ladies, you who said such hard things of poor Britta, since




you cannot appreciate, pity, at least, the timid weary spirit groping in the dark for a hand to lead it, and turning to the first shelter offered, though it be an ungenial one !

James Farquar had been rejected by Britta when she was a blithe young maiden of seventeen ; but his devotion seemed to have outlived the intervening years, for now in the days of her widowhood and adversity, his suit was renewed with additional ardour. At first it seemed like sacrilege to dream of placing another in Magnie's vacant seat, but James did not hurry her decision. He was willing that time and circumstance should advance his claims. He would come and do odd jobs about the farm, or send his sister to tend the little boy when Britta seemed more than usually tired and downcast. He would drop in with a bit of fresh cod, or an oatmeal cake for Magnie, and the mother's heart could feel nothing but gratitude for such generous attentions. There were some things about James she did not like ; he was passionate and easily roused, he was fond of liquor too, but so cautious was he of declaring his sentiments towards her, that she seldom thought of asking herself what her real opinion of him was. He never asked her to accept his addresses, but step by step ingratiated himself in little Magnie's good graces, and thus approached the mother through her son. Meantime, household matters were still in a poor way, for rent day was near, and Britta went with sinking heart to tell the Laird

that she must leave her once happy home, for she could no longer scrape together sufficient funds for paying the rent. Magnie, now a "little three-year-old," trotted by her side on the day which Britta had chosen for her unhappy errand. In the field close by her master's dwelling-house, they encountered James Farquar on his way home; Britta would have passed hastily, for somehow she had of late dreaded what he might say to her, but Magnie ran to receive from the outstretched hand some biscuits, which James had that morning bought for the express purpose. Gratitude for the kindness shown to her son compelled Britta to stop, and James was not long in discovering the traces of tears on her face. "You seem vexed this morning," he said kindly. The tone of his voice was gentle and sympathetic, and it opened a fount in the poor lonely heart beside him. She told her troubles. "You will not be angry, I hope," said the lover, "but to tell the truth, I have settled with the Laird for you." Britta's heart felt very heavy, she knew not why; nor had she the resolution to refuse the help thus given; her silence was a tacit acceptance of Farquar's suit. At least he took it as such, for shortly afterwards he proposed as if it were a matter of course, that she should fix the wedding day. In a month they were married.

"So soon to forget that fine fellow, Magnie!" remarked a spectator of this second wedding. Had the thoughtless speaker but seen the burning tears



which fell the night before on the orphan head of "Magnie's boy ;"—" tears wrung from the depths of a divine despair ;" or could the careless bystander have read what was passing through Britta's mind when she laid her hand in James Farquar's, he would have known too well that Magnie was *not* forgotten. There had been a struggle between love for the living and devotion to the dead, and the feelings that bade her be true to Magnie's memory retired before the all-absorbing affection for her son. After it was all finally settled, Britta quietly set herself to perform her part as the wife of another ; she heroically brought back the smile to her lip, and the cheerful tone to her voice. It is true, no warmer sentiment than gratitude prompted this, but it was well no feeling of aversion mingled with her sacrifice, and considering all things, Britta might have been in time a happy enough woman ; but, alas ! too late for remedy, she discovered the great blots which disfigured her husband's character. He was passionate, and he was jealous. Jealous of every look and word of Britta's, and whenever he saw her caress her boy with more than usual fondness, he would roughly order her to desist. As Magnie grew up, he became more and more like his dead father, and this striking likeness drew the mother's heart still closer to him. She was no heroine of romance ; only a simple cottager, and her second husband was totally different from her in all things, so it was not to be wondered at if they did not agree very well. James felt (and with some truth)

that Britta's affections were divided between her son and her lost love ; he knew too that *his* love had been steadfast and disinterested, and he thought he deserved some return more warm than gratitude or duty prompted. The constant remembrance of all this served to irritate and estrange more and more his already irascible temper. He was a convivial fellow too, was James Farquar ; and in the habit of frequenting a drinking-shop in the neighbourhood ; so when the pale honeymoon was over, James returned to the dangerous habits which had been laid aside in the time of his courtship.


James was "well to do ;" he had money in the bank, cows in the byre, sheep on the hill, ponies on the common ; and there was no lack of fish or meal now, for when they could not procure these with their own hands, they could buy them ; Magnie never went to bed supperless now, but I question much if he would not rather have wanted his warm porridge, and been allowed to kiss his mother, and nestle on her loving breast before going to sleep. He never dared to seek her caress in the presence of his step-father, whose jealousy of the child became almost a monomania. It was not wonderful that Britta's meek spirit rebelled sometimes. She would have borne any amount of ill-treatment to herself ; but when the heavy hand of her intoxicated husband fell with brutal force on the shrinking form of "Magnie's boy," then the mother's heart rose up in arms, and bitter words fell from lips that would have otherwise



been silent. I am afraid Britta sometimes wished that she had descended to beg and be homeless, rather than suffer the bondage she was now under ; but in the second year of her second marriage, a second son was given to her, and her warm, though bruised spirit was filled with a tenderer feeling towards the baby's father. One would have supposed that the new tie would have softened James' feelings as well, but it only made him more unreasonably jealous of Magnie than ever. Now he was always on the watch to detect some symptom of a partial affection on the mother's part, but this he never discovered, for Britta, perhaps aware of her own overweening attachment to her first-born, was particularly careful that the fact might never be observed ; still James was not satisfied and took every opportunity of indulging his own son, and maltreating poor Magnie, whose love for the baby might soon have been turned into hatred by such obvious injustice. But the child-heart of the fatherless boy was overflowing with love, and his affection for his young brother defied all efforts to estrange them. He gave up every juvenile privilege to Gaspar, and nothing pleased him better than to see the child preferred before him. It even vexed his generous soul when Britta interfered in his behalf as sometimes she did. Many a punishment he received and silently bore, when Gaspar should have been the culprit ; and many a trouble he took on his own shoulders, that "the bairn" might have the less to bear. This great and disinterested affec-


tion did not go without its reward, for as Gaspar grew up he learned to appreciate his noble brother, and to return his love with as much fervour, if not as steadfastly and unselfishly.

It was "gall and wormwood" to James Farquar to see the boys get on so well together, and he would fain have loosened the bonds which united them, for he saw in Magnie's growing influence the downfall of his own power to guide Gaspar. Sometimes he was successful in his attempts to make a quarrel, and it was a triumph to the mean-spirited man to hear the hasty word uttered by the younger brother, and to see the tearful eye of the elder, which told of wounded feelings. On such occasions Magnie never retorted, he would go quietly away for a short time, and Britta's coaxing entreaties seldom failed in sending Gaspar to seek forgiveness; then the two would return to the house, as good friends as ever. Thus they grew up from boys to men, and it was well for the impulsive Gaspar, ready alike to resent and forgive, to hate or love, that he had his steady strong brother ever near him. Had he been left alone to his father, the lad would soon have fallen, for he was easily led by those he loved; but whenever his foot neared the edge of the precipice, the firm hand of Magnie was held out to prevent his falling. In the solitude of the night would Britta shed tears of gratitude and joy for her promising sons, so attached to each other, and so dutiful to their neglected mother. Her husband's seeming indifference or un-



kindness fell unheeded when she thought of her boys, and beheld them treading the path of life with steady upright steps. Notwithstanding James' reckless dissipation, the little farm continued to thrive, for Britta was careful and prudent in all household matters, and the lads worked hard and with a good will. They had never expressed a wish to leave home, though numbers of the young men of the island were volunteering for the navy or sailing in the Greenland whalers. Of course Gaspar followed Magnie's bent, and Magnie seemed little disposed for a roving life, so that Britta fondly imagined she would have both her sons always beside her. Judge then what her surprise must have been when Magnie one morning told her, in as gentle a manner as he could assume, that he intended shortly joining a whaler, which was then lying at Lerwick taking in a supply of fresh water, and making up her complement of men. "Oh! my boy, my boy," was all the grief-stricken parent could say, and the anguish in her countenance was so great, that Magnie felt his resolution must give way at once. "Well! mother," he said in a sorrowful tone, "I had quite resolved to go away, but I had not fully considered you in the matter. I was too selfish. I will stay." Britta's joy was great as her grief had been, and as she could see no good reason for this sudden freak of Magnie's, she was fain to believe that he was better at home. But from whatever cause, a change had come over Magnie at this time, and his quick-sighted mother

was not long in observing it. The bright happy look which bespoke the guileless conscience and untainted heart had left the lad's handsome young face ; he was not less thoughtful and kind, but a shade of care had fallen upon him, and he shunned the society of everyone, even that of his constant companion Gaspar. That this change was the consequence of his dutiful resolution of remaining at home seemed very evident to his anxious mother, so after much combating with her own fond wishes, she determined on questioning Magnie, and if such indeed was the case, she resolved that no selfish desire of hers should mar the happiness of a son, who had always made it his study to sacrifice self to those around him. She seized an opportunity when Gaspar and his father were at the evening fishing, and she was alone with her much-loved son. Laying her hand with more than wonted fondness on Magnie's arm, Britta said :—" For two and twenty long years you have been the very light of my life and the sunshine of this house ; you have been husband as well as son to me, sharing all my sorrows and knowing every feeling of my heart, Magnie, jewel, there is a trouble in *your* breast now, surely you can tell your mother what it is." The young man threw his arm around her, and hiding his face on her shoulder, he wept silently for some time. She stroked his dark hair with the same soft caressing touch, which had soothed many of his childish griefs so well, and as he leant lightly on her breast, there came back to Britta's remem-



brance the likeness of him who had so often come with his sorrows to his betrothed, who had leant on her true bosom as his son now did, and who had bequeathed to her love and care this boy, of whom she was so justly proud.

That gushing flood of memories prevented Britta from speaking for some time; at last she found strength to whisper, "What is it, Magnie?"

He controlled himself at once, but still concealed his features, as he replied, "Dear mother, it was very thoughtless of me, I know, to wish to leave you, but I thought Gaspar would comfort you, and I am so miserable."

"No one can take the place of 'Magnie's boy,'" said Britta, "but what makes my darling so unhappy?"

There was a pause, a long, long pause, for of a sudden the cause of all Magnie's suffering had flashed across his mother's mind—"Has Inga refused you"? "No."

"Then why are you so downcast?"

"I cannot—dare not tell you!"

"Oh! Magnie, have you no more confidence in me?"

"It is not that, mother, the secret is not mine. All I can tell you is that I love Inga, but can never hope to call her my wife; and for that reason I would wish to go where the sight of her could not come to kill me, as it is now doing."

"My precious boy! your father gave his life providing for me, and I could give my life for you,

you shall go." A gleam of real pleasure shot athwart Magnie's face.

"Could you really spare me for a little while?" he said. "I would come back to you cured of this love-fit, for *she* would most likely be married, and you would have me always with you."

Britta smiled sadly and stroked the pale face and glossy locks of her darling with an unutterable tenderness of touch. It almost broke her heart to say "Go ;" but she saw how necessary it was to Magnie's peace of mind, so she bravely concealed her own distress and sent him cheerfully forth for his first battle on life's stirring highway. James Farquar's delight at Magnie's going away was very evident to observing eyes, indeed he never concealed his pleasure. Gaspar stormed and sorrowed by turns, but he had lately found a solace for all woes, even for parting with his dearly-beloved brother. So Magnie went on his first voyage far from home, without one regretful thought or memory following after, save those that went out from his mother's breast.


The first year of Magnie's absence went slowly and sadly enough for Britta. It is true, her other son was not less dutiful or affectionate, but he was seldom indoors now, and she missed the manly form and tender voice that had stood so often between her and her unkind husband. She missed too the ear that was ever ready to listen to the complaints she durst not breathe to another, and above all she missed the true heart which held *her*



as the dearest object it possessed. Letters from the sailor came often to comfort Britta in her loneliness, and so she bent her patient head and prayed that she might live to see him return to his island home. But what did Gaspar, now his guide and protector was gone? Why, he found another? Very different it is true from the noble Magnie, but yet one that would lead the unstable youth by the same path which his brother had done. With all the headlong impulse of his passionate temperament, Gaspar had fallen in love with a pretty girl in the neighbourhood. She was a year or so his junior and a well-principled, industrious maiden, the daughter of a fisherman; but with a mind and face that might have graced a higher station. *This* was the star which had risen over young Gaspar's path and had eclipsed, in its brighter radiance, the light by which his brother was wont to lead him. Well indeed it was for Gaspar that the maiden of his choice was so good and pure. The course of their courtship went smoothly enough for a year and a half; then, as it will sometimes happen, the young couple had a quarrel. It was a gentle breeze at first, but Gaspar's impetuosity soon fanned it into a gale which threatened to upset love's barque altogether. Gaspar had inherited somewhat of his father's jealous and hasty nature and imagined that his betrothed gave encouragement to other lads. He ventured to remonstrate with her on the subject, and she, poor girl, quite unconscious of a thought that had strayed from

him upbraided her sweetheart for his want of confidence. Gaspar was not at all satisfied with such an explanation, and they parted in anger. Now Gaspar did everything on the impulse of the moment, so, with his fancied wrong still fresh in his mind, he resolved to leave home for a time and show his fickle fair one, by that means, that he was not so enslaved as she might imagine him to be, and that he could and would break the chain she had woven for him. His thoughts reverted to Magnie, and knowing that the "Queen of the Isles" (in which his brother sailed) was then at Liverpool, he resolved to join her immediately for one voyage at least. When Gaspar made known his resolution to his parents, Britta only sighed and murmured, "This one too;" but James was not so easily managed. His love for his son was the one tender trait in his disposition, and he could not bear to think of parting with him. As usual he laid the blame of whatever was wrong on the absent Magnie, and this roving fancy of Gaspar's entered the catalogue of the former's misdeeds. He upbraided the hapless mother for allowing her eldest son to leave home, adding, "*He* was welcome to go and never return, but to entice my boy from me in this manner is but of a piece with the way he has always gone on."

"Nay, father," interrupted Gaspar. "Magnie is not to blame, nor will I stand by and hear him spoken ill of; the fault, if fault it be, is my own, and nothing shall prevent my going to sea."




So spoke the warm-hearted, heedless boy, and to sea accordingly he went, notwithstanding the tearful eyes of his mother and the expostulating voice of his father.

Magnie was, as may be supposed, very much surprised when his brother arrived on board the "Queen," but a place was soon found for Gaspar, so the young Shetlanders had the pleasure of being together on the voyage out. The "Queen of the Isles" seemed to carry luck with her, for no ship's company captured so many whales as did her brave crew, and no vessel met fairer winds and fewer icebergs than did the barque which bore the Shetland brothers. Laden with her cargo, and bearing men whose hearts leapt with joy at the prospect of so soon returning to friends and fatherland, the good ship set out on her homeward voyage. A fine breeze swelled her canvas, and the icy regions of Greenland were speedily left behind. No incident of any consequence occurred during the voyage until they were within a day's sail of sighting Shetland, and then the captain gave orders that they should bear up for those Islands, as he intended landing on their native rocks those of his crew who belonged to that place. With what alacrity those orders were obeyed by Magnie and Gaspar may be imagined. Absence from his lady love had softened every angry feeling in Gaspar's heart, and he eagerly looked forward to his return home when he might sue for that pardon which he felt sure awaited him. Magnie's senti-

ments were of a more sober kind. The sting of unrequited love remained as sharp as ever, but the remembrance of his lonely, loving mother surmounted every other thought or wish, and he resolved on returning to her side and cheering her declining years, despite the torture to himself.

The brothers lent upon the bulwark of their laden ship and conversed in whispers of that beloved home they were so soon to see, but the evening came down and the last ray of daylight saw them still uncheered by a sight of land. "I shall turn in for a bit," said Gaspar, "and you will call me when the old rocks come in view; good-night, to-morrow we shall be home." The gay-hearted lad patted lightly the shoulder of his thoughtful brother, as he passed him, and in a short time Gaspar was asleep in his hammock dreaming of home and love.

Magnie remained where Gaspar left him. With folded arms and earnest eyes, he looked wearily out on the dark waters around and before him and the thoughts which flowed through his brain were sorrowful ones. His dream of love had been no boyish vision, but a deep-rooted sentiment which would cease only with life. He had vainly striven to drive the remembrance of Inga from his heart, but she still reigned there, and now he was returning home at the call of duty to live (with the sight of her by another's side) a life of endless torture. "Oh! must I always be the one to sacrifice self?" he muttered. But nobler feelings soon predominated again, and upbraiding himself for the un-



generous thought, he breathed a prayer for strength to fulfil his self-sacrificing destiny. The night was very still but cold, and as Magnie paced the deck to keep himself warm, he fancied he heard the agitated moan of waves which precedes a storm. The sound was so faint at first that it could scarcely be distinguished from the usual ripple of water by a vessel's side, but by and by it grew louder, the wind began to whistle among the rigging, and the clear moonlit sky became overcast. To call the captain's attention to the change of the atmosphere was Magnie's first thought, after that he proceeded to arouse Gaspar and the few sailors who were asleep below. "It does look ugly," remarked the master after he had carefully noted the symptoms of an approaching gale, "we must meet it prepared," he added; "snug canvas and be alert, lads, for there's no calculating on what may happen in these northern latitudes." Steadily the wind increased, and ere the night was far spent, it blew a perfect hurricane. "Keep a look out for land on the lee," called the captain to his mate.

"Aye, sir," was the answer, "the good 'Queen of the Isles' has braved many a heavier gale than this, and she must not meet her fate on a rocky lee shore." The dawn was fast approaching, and the crew were anxiously scanning the horizon in the expectation of descrying land, when Magnie espied a light right ahead of them which he soon recognized as that borne by the lighthouse on the Flaggaskerry of Shetland.

"A surly welcome this," he called cheerily to Gaspar, whose eyes were turned with a look of yearning love towards the meteor-crowned cliff.

"Yes, and we are too near home for safety,"



AULD WIFE O' NIDDISTER.

replied Gaspar, in a bitter tone which went to his brother's heart. The captain, evidently thought with Gaspar that land so near was dangerous, for by his command every nerve was strained to turn the ship seaward. The wind was however blowing



fiercely *towards* the land, and there soon seemed little chance that the great unwieldy, and heavily-laden vessel would weather the group of rugged islands lying directly in her path as she fled before the hurricane. Nearer and nearer came the bright Skerry beacon pointing out to the storm-tossed sailors those dangerous crags and eddying tideways which they were unable to avoid. Amid the roaring of wind and surf the stately barque struck on a sunken rock, which instantly opened a passage in her side, through which the sea made a rapid entrance into the doomed ship, threatening her with instant destruction. The valuable cargo was immediately given to its native element, but the temporary ease availed little; then the sailors rushed to the pumps to find them of little service; for the water was gaining rapidly in the hold. "Get the boats out," said the calm voice of the captain. It was no easy matter, for the sea was raging around the devoted ship as if impatient for its prey. Two of the four boats were dashed to pieces alongside, and the situation of the shipwrecked men was becoming more critical every instant. At last they succeeded in manning one boat and cutting her adrift, she rose like a duck on the crest of a wave and struck out boldly for the shore, which she in due time reached safely. The second and last boat was then hauled to the gangway, and those of the crew who still remained crowded into her as speedily as they might. It was at this moment that Magnie drew his brother

aside, and clasping his hand said earnestly to him, "If you come to land and I am missing, don't quite forget your brother, Gaspar. Tell your father in my hour of danger and death, I forget the past and leave my mother to his and your tender keeping. Say to her she had my *latest* thought and prayer, and I bless her for all her kindness to me. Tell Inga Gertson there is but one man on earth that I pray she may marry, and he is my brother." Here he was interrupted by the men in the boat impatiently shouting for him to come. There only remained in the ship the captain, the mate, and the two brothers, and the "Queen" was fast sinking to her bed beneath the sea. Magnie saw at a glance that the boat was already sufficiently filled for safety and would scarcely take *another* man. He glanced at his captain, and saw that he and the gallant mate alone remained in the vessel with him, and had made up their minds for the worst. He looked at his young brother, who stood beside him in a state of utter bewilderment, and his mind was made up. Seizing Gaspar by the arm he hurried him to the vessel's side. "God bless you, my boy; God guard you," he whispered hoarsely, and the next moment Gaspar was in the boat and his brother's hand had cut the rope that fastened the little skiff to her parent ship. Never till this instant had it flashed in Gaspar's bewildered mind the necessity for Magnie's farewell words; but now, as he turned round to assist his brother into the boat and saw him wave from the deck a last

adieu, the extent of the other's sacrifice showed itself to his distracted mind. "Magnie, oh, Magnie!" he cried, extending his arms towards the bold form that stood looking after him. For one instant a pang of death-like agony passed across Magnie's handsome face, and he would have been something more than mortal had he resigned his young life without one regret, but it was speedily succeeded by a smile. Those who saw him there, in all the glory of his youthful manhood and heroic sacrifice, said that he looked as they could fancy some guardian angel would when he has plucked from the gate of hell the soul he loved and watched over. While Gaspar yet looked on his noble kinsman the morning sun broke through a heavy cloud, and a lurid ray fell on the foundering ship. It shone on Magnie as he stood where Gaspar had left him, and the sunny smile which wreathed his lip, and eye, and brow was gilded by a flood of glorious light. This was the last his brother saw of "Magnie's boy;" a huge wave rolled over the "Queen of the Isles," and she went down to her watery tomb with those three brave men.

"But the noblest thing that perished there
Was that young faithful heart."

In the cottage by the sea sat Britta and her husband. It was the day after the storm and shipwreck recorded above. Many an anxious glance was turned by the couple in the direction of the ocean which was rolling past their door quietly

enough now. Who shall tell the boding fears which filled the mother's heart? but she gave them no utterance save in an occasional sigh. James Farquar was moodily eating his breakfast, and betimes seasoning his oatmeal cake with a bitter word flung at his patient wife. His taunts were not heeded by her this morning, for her mind was too sadly employed with thoughts of her sailor sons. A shadow darkened the door, Britta and James looked up simultaneously, and there on the threshold, dripping wet and pale as death, stood their son Gaspar. Britta sprang from her seat and clutched the lad's hands, screaming wildly, "Magnie! Magnie!" "Dead," cried Gaspar, "and I have killed him." He staggered forward and fell insensible into his father's arms. As for Britta, she never stirred, or spoke, or shed a tear. The blow had fallen too deep for the wound to show itself by outward signs, but it bled the more inwardly. She quietly, too quietly, busied herself in chafing the cold limbs of the insensible boy, removing his wet clothes and wrapping him in warm blankets. In a short time he gave signs of returning life, so they laid him gently in bed and sat down to watch beside him. James took a place at the foot of the bed and seldom moved his eyes from the face of his son. Britta sat silent and motionless with Gaspar's cold hand in hers. She seemed quite unconscious of everything around her, for the only thought which found a place in her stunned and bewildered brain was—Magnie dead.

Magnie, the comfort of her widow-hood, the support of her later years, the pride of her existence; Magnie, the son of her first, her only love. Hour followed on hour, and still that pair of silent watchers sat by Gaspar's couch. He had wakened to life but to fall into a deep and troubled sleep. As the day advanced his breathing became easier, and about noon he opened his eyes with a smile which told of returning health and sense. His glance fell first on his father, who smiled back to him and said, "You are better, my son, are you not? welcome home."

Without returning this affectionate greeting Gaspar turned to his mother, "Can you forgive me, mother?" he said, with brimming eyes.

"I know your hand was never lifted against your own flesh and blood, Gaspar."

"Oh! you judge rightly, mother, for if I could I would have given my life for him as *he* did for me."

"Don't excite yourself now, boy," roughly interposed James, "we will hear all that another time."

"No, father, I must speak now, and *you* must listen too, for now that he is no more you shall acknowledge Magnie's generous and disinterested affection for me, your son. Oh! Magnie, Magnie, you said truly that I should never know how much you loved me; but oh! my brother, none ever loved as *you* have done!"

"Well, well, if you are going to tell melancholy stories, I will go away," replied James.

"No you must stay, father, I *will* have you hear the message from the dead." James seated himself doggedly on a chair close by, and Gaspar, gently taking his mother's hand between his own, repeated the farewell words with which Magnie had charged him. Then with simple pathos he told how the noble youth had preferred to see his brother saved before himself; how he had helped Gaspar to the boat; how he severed, with his own strong hand, the last link that bound him to life; how he had smiled in the midst of death; and, above all, how he had sacrificed his passion for Inga Gertson, his dreams of a pleasant future, his very life itself, on the altar of brotherly love. "Has he died in vain, father?" asked Gaspar, when his affecting tale was ended. "Shall we not in word and deed fulfil his solemn parting words?"

James' hard nature—or rather the crust of vice in which he had enclosed his heart—was broken at last, and choking emotions prevented his replying. There were no dry eyes now, for Britta had at last been moved to show her grief in a more natural way, and was weeping abundantly.

"Dear mother," sobbed Gaspar, "I can never be to you what *he* was; but I will do my best to obey poor Magnie's dying request."

"And I," said James, suddenly rising, "will, please the Lord, be the husband I once promised you I would be; forgive the past, Britta, if you can, and try to believe you have a husband and a son yet alive."



James carried out his new intentions, and Britta's later years were soothed by the loving care of husband and son. She lived to a good old age, but to the latest day of her life her face still wore the impress of the blows which had bereft her of her lover-bridegroom, and her brave young son. And when the lifeless form of the aged woman was borne from the bed where she had died, the neighbours found a little faded packet under her pillow, which, on being opened, was found to contain a blue ribbon tied in a lover's knot, and a tiny white rosette taken from her baby's christening cap. These little memorials of her early loved and lost told the hidden tale of Britta's heart. Gaspar, in due time, married his own and his brother's early love, Inga Gertson, and their first-born son received the loved and honoured name of Magnie Ingester.

THE HAUNTED HOLME.*

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RUMOURS of the frightful American war to be fought had reached even the secluded Shetland Isles early in the autumn of 1860 ; and an anxious interest in the coming conflict was especially evinced by one household there. Of course the lads of the family were heroic in *their* talk on the subject, and only hoped that the "dogs of war" would be let loose in Canada as well, so that they might volunteer for the glorious service with something like a reason at their backs.

Their father talked gravely of The Right, and being, like most of the old Lairds, a staunch Conservative, threw all his sympathies into the Southern cause. His wife and sister enlisted their hearts on the same side for yet another reason. In days gone by Mrs Farquarson had watched a ship sail out into the wide Atlantic with her only brother on board, who had embarked to seek his fortune in the New World. Miss Farquarson, then a very young maiden, had stood by, and never cared for anyone to know how much her heart ached as the ship became a spectre on the horizon, and finally faded into the dim visionary distance.

* Holme—in Shetland the word denotes a small grassy ocean islet.

And into the dim visionary distance Time carried her youthful dream along with the sister's hope of seeing the dear lad again; for although he *did* make a fortune in America, he finally married and settled down as a planter in one of the Southern States. His letters, few and far between, were all that reached the old island—not that Walter Ross was wanting in affection, but it always happens so. Day by day new hopes and new interests open around every soul on this rackety globe; and when time and space divide, it is utterly impossible to identify oneself with the far-away surroundings of the beloved; and those same surroundings are chief links in the chain of family affection. So Mrs Farquarson bestowed the name of Walter on one of her boys, who wore the blue eyes of her brother; and Suneva found silver threads coming among her brown hair. At the same time she awoke from her quiet longings to the recollection that she had unconsciously grown into an old-maid Auntie, as dear as might be to the second Walter, whose seventeen years brought him within a short space of his uncle's age at the time of his departure. Thereupon Aunt Suneva very wisely put on a lace cap and wrote pleasant letters to (old) Walter's wife, and heard about his sons and daughter, and the negro servants, and rice planting, and last of all, of the fearful storm near at hand.

"Don't I wish I were cousin Bob, that's all!" said young Walter, after reading the newspaper,

one mail day. "He'll be an officer in the Southern army as sure as anything—oh!"


"I wish uncle would write and tell us all about it," replied his brother Bruce, who was some years younger than Walter, but more thoughtful and reserved in manner. "I fear it may be a bad job for him, as everybody predicts the *Southern* to be a desperate cause."

"No fear," Walter cried; "they're a noble lot of fellows, and I'll bet you anything they'll thrash those interfering Yankees yet."

"Walter! Walter! Bruce! Such news!" was heard in the hall, and light hurrying feet—making all the din they could with the aid of school-boy boots—came rushing through the passage.

"Stop, Harold, stop—I'm going to tell," added another boy-voice, as a door along the way opened quickly, and some one intercepted Harold in his head-long race. A skirmish was the result, which was ended, however, by Walter, who caught a brother in each hand, while Bruce demanded their "News." But news was not to be got from them, the breathless little fellows, all at once.

"Come and ask mamma," said Bruce, where-upon Walter relinquished his hold on Harold, who being thirteen, was rather too troublesome for the one hand of even a big brother. Swinging Willie from side to side in a teasing playful manner, Walter led the way to a morning room where mamma and auntie usually sat at work. Here they found the ladies and their father all looking grave enough to



subdue the liveliest spirits. Walter's gay air changed at once to one of deep concern. "Mamma, dear, what's wrong?"


"Read the letter to them, please, papa, from uncle Walter, my dears," and she handed a foreign letter to her husband.

"MY DEAREST SISTER,—I have sad tidings for you. My beloved wife has been taken from me by—had I not best call it—a *kind* death which has removed her from the evil to come. My home is gone, the negroes revolted, and myself and sons must buckle on our swords and go fight for the country. I have an earnest solemn request to make before I set out for what may be my end. Will you take the charge of my one daughter—my sweet little girl who has no guardian—when we join the war? I can now have an opportunity of sending her to Britain, later I may not be able. You little guess the pangs that will rack our hearts at parting from our darling, for who dare anticipate which one of us may return from the field of battle. I will not wait your answer. I know your heart of old, so will send my treasure. The 'Ohio' will leave this port next week, and will reach Scotland a month after you receive this. Remember us in your prayers, and if I never see my little girl again I give her to your motherly charge with my best blessing.—Ever, dear sister, yours affectionately,
WALTER ROSS."

A prolonged "Oh-h" from the two elder lads came in as postscript to the momentous letter. Of

course they had no personal regret for the unknown aunt, therefore all their interest became centred in the cousin, who was so soon to become a member of their household. The conjectures about her were endless, and the plans regarding her proposed, rejected, and resolved upon, were quite as numerous. All the members of the family were equally as earnest as the boys in the matter, and although *they* felt at first inclined to grumble at the idea of a girl coming in among them to spoil their (ruder) fun, they soon ceased such demonstrations when they saw how eagerly their parents entered into the idea of having a little soft thing to pet—the parents who were proud enough of their sons, but had never ceased to regret that they had always talked of their offspring as “the boys”—never “the children,” which pleasant phrase includes all that goes to make the circle of home complete.

What puzzled and amused the young Farquarsons most was the strange fact that no one knew either the age or name of the new cousin. Harold supposed she would be called Susan, and must be a stupid little thing. Willie was inclined to think that she was rather pretty and nice, and about his own age (twelve) and named Mary. Bruce declared it to be his positive opinion that being an only daughter she must be a spoilt child, have a fancy name like Eveline, and was sallow, skinny, and yankeefied somewhat. Walter having come to a more romantic time of life, believed that the little cousin was a fair delicate blossom, like enough



themselves to be agreeable, but unlike enough to be attractive—(his idea was taken from “Uncle Tom’s” Eva of course)—but on the subject of her name he confessed himself to be—as the child herself was—altogether at sea. “Fine lot we are,” he laughingly exclaimed; “here we are, three wise heads, three foolish heads, and one equally divided between both extremes, all waiting to make any amount of fuss about a—little girl. That’s what uncle called her, and neither the three wise heads, nor the three foolish heads, nor the one that is mixed, can get further than ‘that little girl.’ Nice titles to address her by——‘Welcome, little girl—come here, little girl—My dear little girl.’ Isn’t it fun?”

“Make fun out of it, if you like, Walter,” said Bruce, “but for my part I feel as if it added a great deal to the sadness of her coming; giving her a lonely friendless sort of association, poor little girl.” And so “poor” got tacked on to the other two words, and the young traveller was always so designated.


Mrs Farquarson and Aunt Suneva entered into consultations many with Mam Kirsty, the nurse who had carried old Walter in his boyhood, and who longed to pet his little daughter. Mam Kirsty had had dreams about Walter Ross, had seen fiery things in the sky, had been whispered to by the fairies, had detected Trows prowling about, and was altogether in a mysterious state with regard to the coming change in the household, but she entered warmly into

all the arrangements that were being made for the comfort and pleasure of the poor lonely child. A small bedroom was fitted up for her express use, near to Aunt Suneva ; and somehow it became generally understood that she was to be especially auntie's charge. "I shall get jealous at this rate, auntie dear," Walter said in his loving merry way, for even he seemed likely to take a second place in her heart.

Meantime the weeks went past. November was drawing near, and news of the little girl's arrival in Scotland was looked for daily. Friends had been written to, who were to see her safely on board the mail steamer for Shetland, and Mr Farquarson would meet that vessel at its terminus of Lerwick. A few hours' sail in a boat would bring her to the island where her future home was to be, and then—well, it was all work of imagination after that.

"There will be no mail this week, I fear," said Bruce, one day early in November, as he looked out on the snow which was rapidly covering the hillocks, and saw the gale gather strength as it hurried across the sea carrying white foam on its impatient wings.

"Mail ! think yourself lucky, old boy, if you get bread across the sound from Lerwick, leave alone letters from the south," replied Walter. "I say," he added in a lower voice, "I wonder if this west wind will bring any wreck on shore." Papa says he is determined to put down wrecking in the island, and I know a good number of the men are on the look-out for wood, so what will be the result, I do not know."



"Why, Watty, the folks here could not live without a bit of smuggling and that sort of thing going on. They don't mean any harm, and papa may preach for ever but he will never teach a Shetlander that it is wrong to appropriate to his own use what the sea sends on shore."

"Bruce, Bruce, you are too Shetlandic yourself, I fear. It's a mean thing to cheat the powers that be, and I intend to see that papa is obeyed."

"Yes, it's mean, and I would not make work boxes out of the cedar washed on shore for anything!"

"Stop there," laughed Walter, "I am as bad as any, I know, but it wasn't for the wood, you know. It is such rare exciting fun rushing into the cold tearing sea, and jumping about among the rocks, within an inch of being caught up by the plunging sea-horses and carried, goodness knows where; and the shouting, and running, and climbing, and catching, and"—

"Sore throat, stiff legs, bed and gruel afterwards, eh, Watty?"

"There now, don't tease, that's a good fellow. Suppose we go out and have a run along shore to blow the cobwebs out of one's head." "Agreed." And away the brothers went into the tempest and swirling snow-wreaths, accompanied by their big Newfoundland, and soon followed by Harold and Willie, who were seldom far from Walter's side when an adventure was on foot.

The storm that as yet was fitful and gathering on land, had been rioting at will on the ocean for

hours, and nothing could be seen from the shore but a raging, furious, fighting world of waters. There is always something sublime and awe-inspiring in the sight of a sea storm ; and the four lads stood still, with uncovered brows, to watch the strife going on around the iron walls of their island. Studding the bay, about a gunshot distance from the shore, lay a group of very small islets. The sand marking their margins on the inner side, and the low dark rocks which turned like frowning brows towards the ocean beyond, contrasted well with the fresh green turf adorning them ; while the foam which leaped across, flecking their emerald sides with white, shone like the unearthly robes of those Trows which were said to haunt the islands during a storm. The continuous deafening roar which the sea kept up as it broke its fury upon this group, was perfectly bewildering, and although there should have been no link of association between the lonely, helpless child coming from afar, and that raging giant, so omnipotent in his strength, yet, strangely enough the watchers on shore were all thinking of her while they marked the storm.

And then—why, just then, beyond the line of islets, and on the top of a heavy wave—there rose up clearly, within the sight of those four, a dark hulk, like the dismantled body of a great ship. It seemed as if it were being carried broadside on to the rocks. The light glistened for a moment on its side, and lit up what looked like a crowd of pale faces gazing landwards from the deck ; but



the phantom wreck disappeared from view, amid the seething waves and breakers, before either of the lads could utter an exclamation.

Eagerly they strained for another glimpse of the strange vision, and long they lingered in hopes of seeing it explained, but nothing further met their gaze, and at last darkness sent them home to tell and wonder over what they had seen. Mam Kirsty heard the story from Willie, and straightway groaned forth that the "puir young thing wad never come this length—a' folk might ken that. The ship had been seen na doubt. What were the boys ta see sic a sight for, if no' for warning about the puir perrie bairn that was ta come and would never come noo." I am afraid Willie believed enough of nurse's prediction to send him sad-hearted to bed, but a sound sleep woke him up as bright and hopeful as his brothers, who were early preparing for a sally in quest of fun and game. The former they expected to find in the shape of snow-balls; the latter in the form of rabbits; and any adventures which wind or wave chose to send would be thankfully accepted into the bargain. Although the lads had talked of their vision till they were tired, on the previous evening, that did not prevent their resuming the subject as soon as they were clear of the breakfast room, where papa generally laughed them out of "superstitious folly," and, as if by general consent, all four turned in the direction of the spot where they had seen so strange a sight. A stranger sight still

was there when they arrived. The bay within the sheltering line of islands was literally crowded with gigantic whales, who had, for some inconceivable (but doubtless grave and blubberly) reason, passed through one of the narrow sounds, and not being gifted with much ingenuity had failed to find their way out again. The shore was thronged by the fisher folks of the island, who were helpless to secure the noble booty so nearly within their reach, as the storm was still raging too vehemently for a boat to venture on the sea. "This is dreadful—This is tantalising," were two of the mildest expressions used by the young Farquarsons as they looked on the huge monsters gambolling in such unconscious security within a stone's throw of the shore.

"Can nothing be done?" Bruce cried, as he danced among the pebbles in an ecstasy of distress.

"Hurrah!" cried Harold in reply, "I'll have one at anyrate," and away he flew along the shore, clasp-knife and boat-hook in hand. The cause of his violent shout was a small whale which had approached rather near, and, getting entangled among some low crags and sunken rocks, had become almost stranded. From rock to rock bounded Harold, sometimes slipping into the boiling pools between, sometimes stumbling headlong over the masses of seaweed, sometimes flung over by the surf dashing on the shore, sometimes bruised and breathless, but never daunted until he stood waist-high in the sea beside the floundering leviathan, and drove his knife into its side.



The wounded creature gave forth a groan of pain, and plunged wildly about in the basin of sea, which formed its prison. Again Harold struck at it. This time with the boat-hook which had a short rope attached to its handle, and the whale, rendered mad with its pain, made one plunge more desperate than before and gained the deep water again. Who shall say with what joy the poor animal turned to rejoin its companions? I daresay we can understand how it felt a little, and I am sure we know perfectly well what were Harold's feelings on beholding his fancied prize escape. He sprang on to another crag and caught the end of the rope which held his boat-hook. What insane idea the boy possessed of being able to retain the monster in that manner, I cannot say, but whatever his notion was it had a cold water shower over it very speedily. Past the rock on which he stood darted the whale, and Harold, clutching the rope, was flung off his balance and went head first into the sea.

"Stop him! stop him! Walter, Walter," Bruce had cried, when he saw his impetuous younger brother rush off on such a rash adventure, and Walter was not slow to do all in his power. He could not *stop him*, but he could do the next best, he could go after him although he only reached the spot in time to follow Harold into his cold bath. "Oh, boys! boys!" cried little Willie to the grey fishermen around, "they will both be killed. Oh, what shall I do! oh, can no one save them, will

some one run for papa? Bruce look, Walter has gone after him. Oh Watty Watty! some one help him. Some one help him;" and Willie would have made a third among the waves had he not been held back by those near. Some of the men present with ropes fastened round their waists attempted to gain the place from whence the lads had been swept, but before any one had reached the spot, Harold's hand was seen grasping at the sea-weed, then the other hand took hold and he was soon observed scrambling on to the rocks again. Walter was less fortunate. Before he could lay hold of the growing sea tang a long rolling wave caught him in its outward rush and he was carried far into the bay.

"Lord hae mercy on the dear young maister," cried the sturdy fellows who were now standing by Harold, for they could plainly see Walter's pale set face rise on a great wave that was on its way to the far ocean, and what hope was there that any returning billow would bring him back through rocks and islands all unscathed. The throng upon the shore looked on aghast and Walter's brothers wept and wrung their hands in helpless sorrow. One by one the whales found a way of exit and the bay soon became emptied of its uncanny visitants and then the strangest thing of all occurred. The wave which bore poor Walter away gave its helpless burden to a sister wave, who gave him to yet another, and thus buffeted about, struggling and dying, the boy was tossed upon the

sandy shore of the Haunted Holme where he and his brothers had marked the phantom wreck on the previous evening. Before the waves could rush back and carry him away once more, a sea maiden with her attendant Trows flew down the slope and caught hold of Walter, dragging him swiftly beyond the tide mark. Then the spray and mist came swirling across the bay, hiding every thing from the gaze of the bewildered on-lookers.

By this time the alarm had reached Mr Farquarson, who now hurried to the spot followed by all the family. A few enquiries served to convince his father that all hope of saving Walter was gone, and although Bruce added his testimony to that of the fishermen regarding the Trows seen on the haunted island, Mr Farquarson could only treat such a statement as the result of heated imaginations. Yet while the short day lasted his friends lingered on the shore, with a faint yearning hope that the bright lad's body might be brought back from the deep. Alas! the spin drift wrapped the whole bay in its drenching fog, and nothing could be seen or heard but thundering waves.

Harold's anguish was something dreadful, and all that even his mother roused from her own deep grief could do to soothe him was in vain. Worn out at last when night came he fell asleep and dreamed that Walter beckoned him to the Haunted Holme. The boy started up and looked out. The storm had spent itself, and of all the spirits of the night, only a solemn starlight was awake.

"Watty, dear Watty, I will come!" he cried. He was soon dressed and out of doors, hurrying but half awake to the scene of yesterday's tragedy. As he reached the shore, the hoarse voices of men shouting, fell upon his ear. Thoroughly awake now, Harold looked eagerly sea-wards, but could see nothing, only the loud shouts grew plainer and plainer wafted across the bay from the direction of the islets.

Harold was certainly not a superstitious boy, but I question if any one of his age would have stood alone there and heard that noise, remembering all the circumstances of the previous two days, without getting goose-skin as he did. Some wild verses which he had once heard came into Harold's mind, and he found himself almost repeating—

"Oh, it can't be true that a ghostly crew,
Have pulled with you at a fall,
Nor the dead with a shout when the watch turned out
Have answered to their call,
And it surely never in time ere happed,
All alone on the stormy sea,
That the seaman dead from the ocean's bed,
Ere reefed a sail with thee."

Don't laugh at the troubled boy, young fellows; for after *that* he only did what one and all of you ought to do in even less extremity than his—he went down on his knees and prayed.

While he prayed, a clear voice that he knew joined its mellow notes to the hoarse sailor voices calling across the water, and at that sound Harold

sprang up, strong and joyous, with a firm conviction that Walter had not been drowned.

There were not many eyes to be opened that night in the Ha' when Harold burst in with his hurried story. It is long before sudden sorrow lets one sleep, and almost all the household were dressed although in their rooms.

At first they believed that Harold must have lost his reason, and when that was proved a mistake, his father chided him for allowing himself to be carried away by superstition. But Harold stuck so manfully and clearly to his story that Mr Farquarson was at last obliged to give credence to his statement.

As neither Bruce nor the men servants had retired to rest, a pretty strong party was soon on its way to the beach. Again—this time in the hearing of many—came the loud shouts from the island, distinctly heard and interpreted as a call for aid. Mr Farquarson was now as much excited as his sons. "Let's give it them back and see what follows," he cried. Bruce led a lusty "Hurrah," which was answered immediately. Then a boat was quickly got ready, and Mr Farquarson, his sons, and two men were soon speeding in the direction of the Holme. As they neared the shore the voices ceased, and soon they could dimly discern figures on the beach, then a voice whose tones that made their hearts leap, called from out the darkness, "Is that you, papa? Are you there, Bruce?"

Mr Farquarson could not reply, his words were so broken by suppressed feelings, but a low heartfelt

'Thank God' passed his lips in a whisper, at the same moment that Bruce and Harold sprang to their feet and absolutely yelled forth Walter's name.


Before the boat could strand Harold jumped into the water and floundering on shore, flung himself upon Walter who hugged him much as a bear does its cub—but that mode of caressing is usual with boys.

A small group of people stood a little behind Walter, waiting with delicate feeling until he had exchanged greetings with his father, and it was some little time before the Laird could do anything but hold Walter's hands. When he had somewhat steadied his shaken nerves, he turned for an explanation of all these mysteries, but Harold had anticipated him—

"A shipwreck, papa. It was a real ship we saw that night. Some of the people are on the other Holme, they say. A few of the sailors got on here and one or two passengers—one or two women and children, poor things!"

The morning was breaking, and Mr Farquarson could now see the poor people who stood wet and tired, but so patient, beside him. There were six sailors, a young lady, her husband and child, a girl and two little boys.

"I fear the boat will scarcely take all at once," said the Laird, scanning the group. "Walter, you take the ladies and little ones over with one or two men to help—rouse up our people, and send off two big boats."



The children were tenderly lifted into the boat, the husband went with his wife and to act as one of the crew, while Walter took charge of the girl who seemed young and timid.

"That's the mermaid we saw," whispered Harold to Bruce. "I knew her at once. Look at her long hair, I saw it fly out when she ran down the brae, but it seemed green then and I do believe it's really black."

We may pass over the joyful return of Walter. A wonderfully short space of time saw all the shipwrecked people under the hospitable Ha' roof. No questions had been asked them, for only creature comforts could be attended to at first, but presently Harold's curiosity overwhelmed every other consideration, and he would fain have plied his *mermaid* with questions if Walter would have let him. The mermaid was a very beautiful girl of sixteen, perhaps, with the glorious dark eyes and clear brown skin of one descended from European parents but reared in a tropical climate, and Harold was head over ears in love before she had even exchanged her wet clothes for those which aunt Suneva brought. As for Walter, let anyone read the thirty-third blissful chapter of "David Copperfield" and he will learn there precisely the state of Walter's mind.

The two stranger ladies were resting on the sofa in the forenoon and Mr Farquarson was away learning particulars of the wreck from the captain, who had been rescued from another islet, when

Harold made some laughing allusion to all the matter of fact ending which had come to their ghost story, thus introducing the subject of the "poor little girl." The lads did not think that their conversation was overheard, but presently Walter observed a mischievous smile pass over the younger lady's face, and then she said in a quaint winsome tone.—


"I am afraid nurse knows best, and you will never indeed see that *poor little girl*."

Bruce coloured, Harold stared, Willie asked "why?"—"Because," she replied, with heightened colour, and a strange quaver in her voice, "because the 'Ohio' is beyond 'fixing' on the Haunted Holme, and I'm—yes, you see—I'm ; why *I'm Meta Ross*."

Not one of the lads uttered a word, but in most ungentelemanly fashion stared with all their widely-opened eight eyes at the pretty shy American maiden so utterly unlike all that they had imagined their cousin to be.

Mrs Farquarson was still in bed, prostrate with the shock which Walter's accident had occasioned, but even she could not have welcomed the traveller with more tenderness than did auntie who hurried across the room at this disclosure and clasped Meta in her arms.

After that the cousins were not backward in their greetings—at least the three younger ones, for Walter, as I told you, was in a crazy doadyfied state of mind and did not venture upon any of the cousinly freedoms which were going the round.



It isn't any good telling you more about it. You know as well as I do what Mrs Farquarson said, and what his wife—didn't say, but thought; and how Mam Kirsty found a loophole to creep through with regard to her predictions. You know how the war went on, and how Walter Ross laid down his brave manhood when shielding Stonewall Jackson from Yankee bayonets. You know how the Indian-eyed Meta wept for her father and "would not be comforted" until one fair Summer's day when Walter rowed her in his wee boat across to the Haunted Holme, and did not bring her back until she had promised to rescue him again—this time from the sea of despair and all that sort of thing.

I do not know if Willie has yet settled that the supernatural part of the whole thing has been satisfactorily explained; and I know Harold revenges himself on Walter (for carrying off his mermaid) by telling his brother that they owe all their happiness to the unromantic whale who carries his clasp-knife somewhere in its blubber.

Bruce corrects Meta's Americanisms, is her obedient servant, and wants Walter to explain how his conscience can allow him to appropriate *wreck* in the way he is doing.

And Walter laughs merrily at his young brothers, while his blue eyes follow the "fawn-like child of green savannah and the leafy wild" who goes tripping about the old place, carrying the sweetest sunshine in her dusky face,—carrying new and satisfying joy into the depths of his parents' hearts,

—carrying back an old emotion to Aunt Suneva's bosom—carrying a pleasant promise of married happiness for him at some future time—carrying, in fact, all that “Doady” dreamed, and all that every youth dreams sometime or other.

A PRACTICAL JOKER.

PRACTICAL jokes are all very well to a certain extent, and no one enjoys them more than I do when they are harmless and proceed from nothing more than innocent fun ; so, boys and girls, I will help you to play your witty tricks, and will enjoy them if they should even be at my own expense. But so soon as you begin to practise upon the fears of others, or there is a chance of your jokes wounding some one's sensitive feelings, then I shall hold up my finger and look serious at you.

I never knew a fellow so addicted to practical joking as a hooded crow which we had about the house a few years ago. I daresay some of you boys who are fond of bird-nesting, and who pretend to a little knowledge of ornithology, can claim acquaintance with the particular sort of crow of which our pet was a specimen, and perhaps you can also tell us how famous those same "hoodies" are at playing tricks, apeing other birds, and in fact constituting themselves the monkeys of the feathered tribes. Ours was a very handsome fellow, with gentlemanly "facings" of iron-grey on his wings, and back, and head. We got him when he was very young, and he soon became as tame as possible. What a sly twinkle

there was about his keen black eye, and how knowingly he cocked his head on one side and croak-croaked ! If he was given food when he was not hungry, he would steal away—cautiously observing whether his movements were remarked or not—and hide the precious morsel in some out of the way place, and strange to say, he could find it again when required. If we detected him in the act, how foolish and “sold” he looked. He played a very wicked trick once, and deserved a good caning for it, but then you know it would be a difficult thing to cane a bird, and we didn’t experiment upon “Crabba.” The window of a bedroom was open, and the “bird of ill-omen” stole in, and finding a watch upon the table he deliberately broke the glass, pulled off the hands and deposited them in a hair-brush ; then he picked out the pins from their cushion, and stuck them all over a cap ; and after upsetting a bottle of oil and strewing the floor with the contents of a dressing-case, the marauder decamped as he came in, leaving only ruin and confusion to tell *who* had been there.

Another of his favourite amusements (but his friend said that it was the spirit of ‘enquiry and not the demon of mischief which inspired him at such times) was to perch on a bush beside the girls when they were gardening. Very carefully would Crabba observe their movements, and quite with a scientific toss of the head would he mark how they planted their kitchen vegetables and flowers, then, when

their labours were over and they retired to the house, the "critic upon the twig" would hop down, and one by one pull up the plants so newly set, and of course ; oh yes, of course, it was only to find out how it was all done, and what sort of plants they were—for he was such a knowledge-thirsty crow. This was very provoking, no doubt, but his defenders would not allow it to come under the head of practical jokes, so we had just to "grin and bear it." Another thing that was alleged to be the result of other feelings than those of mischief and trickery was the persevering way in which he persecuted the poor little crocuses and snowdrops. Each one as it lifted its fair head from its cold winter couch was quickly spied and promptly beheaded. Crabba must have been a botanist in metempsychosis. I very much enjoyed one of his tricks, and must therefore tell you what it was. One day a vain, saucy girl came marching along the road with a very grand cap on, so very grand and so full of artificial flowers and flaunting ribbons that it attracted the notice of master Crow, who chanced to be passing overhead. Down he swooped, and the Maiden's vanity received a just but severe blow when she beheld her gaudy head-gear taking an aerial flight in Crabba's claw. She never saw it again, nor did any other person.

We often missed trifles, such as a thimble, once a sixpence, often a clay pipe and needles and pins ; but knowing who the thief was, and how far beyond the pale of the police did his flight extend, we could

only mourn our lost properties, and put up with the want of them. Last year a box full of earth, in which mignonette had been kept, was being turned over, when among the earth was found a perfect hoard of missing articles. Undoubtedly the box, which stood outside the window where Crabba often sat, had been the passive receiver of much of his stolen goods. But Crabba had a good and tender side to his character. He had favourites in our household, and the preference which he showed those individuals was very marked. He was very vindictive, but he was also very mindful of favours received, and daily frequented the window of a gentleman's house where had once received a crust of Bread. There, like Poe's famous Raven, he sat on and on until his usual morsel was kindly given, and then he departed with his weird-like croak, and it would have been a good thing for Lenore's lover if he had hit on a like expedient for getting rid of his incubus.

One of my sisters (whose especial property Crabba was) was favoured with that gentleman's most particular regard. She was very ill once, and for a long time confined to her room. We observed that Crabba looked very anxious and absent often, and shunned the house very much during those weeks. He seldom came, as was his wont, tapping at the window for admission ; but when the missing face shed its light once more by the parlour hearth, Crabba was brought in to share in the general happiness, and if mute signs can show joy,



then indeed the "uncanny bird" proved that he did not want heart, though he was so full of mischief and frolic. In spite of all his nonsense we might have had him still and loved him withal, if he had kept his practical joking within the bounds of good humour and fun, but tiny trots began to run about the old place, and whether it was that Crabba saw in those other birdies rivals which would supplant him, or that he could not resist the chance of playing upon their evident fears and helpless infancy, certain it was that children became the butts for all his trickery, and so a solemn sitting of the household authorities was called and the unanimous verdict was a sentence of perpetual banishment on poor Crabba. One thing I forgot to tell you, and that was that Crabba was learning to talk—really to talk—and at the time that he was sent away he could say "Papa" quite distinctly. It was a sorrowful parting after all, for Crabba was a general favourite, despite his mischief and his really dangerous habit of playing practical jokes. He was kindly and carefully placed in a basket and consigned to the charge of a distant friend, and the last that we heard of poor Crabba, as the boat wafted him from the land of his birth, was a frantic call for "Papa!" and shouts of laughter from the sailors who bore him away.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SHETLAND SHAWL.

BUTTERFLIES and moths are not the only children of creation who rejoice in a chrysalis state during their early youth. I, for one, have gone through many a transition stage ere I donned my present fairy form ; and I am no insect, but rather an enemy to the branch of animated beings. Like the child whose memory carries no recollection of infancy to riper years, I have no remembrance of when my life began, or how the first of my existence sped. I clad the form of a little playful lamb, whose chief ornament and comfort I was, but my recollections of that time are too hazy to bear description on paper ; besides having nothing to do with the tale which I am about to relate.

It was summer-time, and the creature whose body I adorned was feeling the rays from the mid-day sun to be rather uncomfortably warm. He wandered up and down in a restless manner, and at last scampered off to the sea-shore, whose cool waves came softly up among the slippery stones, and curled about the white lamb's feet. So deliciously cool and enticing did the pure water feel, that the heedless animal ventured out a bit on



GADA STACK—FOULA.

the shining sand in pursuit of a retreating wave. Presently he came to some small rocks covered with delicate sea-weed, which the greedy creature began to nibble with great delight. He forgot all all about the sea, and the sand, and the flowing tide, and was consequently much astonished at feeling himself gently lifted up by a swelling wave, which speedily bore him on its bosom out to seaward. It was in vain that the terrified animal struggled to regain the shore; further and further he was borne from it, and at last, exhausted and terror-stricken, he resigned himself to his fate.

A good way off the land there lay a group of rocks, which were completely covered by the ocean at high water, but with the ebbing of the tide raised their shaggy heads above the sea for a breathing space. Clovenskerry (one of the group) had drawn his counterpane of white-tipped surf halfway over his shoulders, and was preparing to dive to his ocean bed again, when an unceremonious wave tossed up on his rugged forehead the poor shivering figure of my sustainer, the little lamb. Rather insulted at the liberty taken, the ancient dweller of the deep would have instantly returned to the waves the tiny, trembling refugee, but it clung so wildly to the floating locks of old Clovenskerry, that that venerable gentleman was constrained to vouchsafe it the protection which he was rather chary of bestowing on anything save cormorants and seals.

By-and-bye the evening came on, and the fish-

ing-boats were returning from the haaf deeply laden with fish. With their "snowy square sails swelling" in the pleasant summer air, they looked a pretty sight as they neared the land in company and then dispersed in sixes and sevens to the different fishing-stations. The first boat which neared the harbour, whose entrance was guarded by Clovenskerry and its satellites, was the fairest of the fleet, besides being the fastest sailor, the deepest laden, and the most skilfully managed. Her skipper was a hale and vigorous man of middle age, with bright, merry blue eyes, and rather florid complexion. His figure was straight and broad, and showed to great advantage as he leant back in his boat, with one hand laid lightly on the tiller, and the other holding to his lips a conch-shell, which he blew from time to time, to give notice to his friends on shore of the near approach of the "King of the fishers." Maunce Scholla (for that was the skipper's name) was a Shetlander of the true old scandinavian blood. He owned quite a modest little independence in the way of ponies and sheep, besides being a most energetic and enterprizing fisherman. He was generally understood to be a *substantial, well-to-do fellow*, and there was much competing among the young men of the hamlet, who should be so fortunate as to fish in Maunce's boat.

Under these circumstances no one will wonder that Maunce Scholla's five comrades were picked men; but we have only to do with one of them.



Olaf Oyason abode in the near neighbourhood of his skipper. He was an only child, and lived alone with his widowed mother, who had been a lady's maid in her girlhood, and had acquired a good education for one in her sphere of life. She was a clever woman, with a fund of good common sense, and practical piety. She had brought up her son, as few only sons are brought up, without spoiling or indulgence. He was the light of her life and the idol of her existence ; but her love for Olaf had not blinded her to his faults, or stayed her hand from correction when it was required. Her influence over her son was of course very great, and he repaid her love, as it deserved, with the deepest filial affection. The few acquirements which she had picked up when young, she early imparted to the boy, and his natural ability led him to add whatever he could seize upon to that which his mother had taught him. Thus, when Olaf reached man's estate, he had gained much useful and literary knowledge, of which his brother fishermen were utterly ignorant. Olaf was a particular favourite with Maunce Scholla, and the young man was ever anxious to deserve the good opinion of his skipper.

And now, to return to my tale. Maunce and Olaf were conversing blithely as their boat entered the harbour, but Olaf's quick eye was not long in espying the waif on Clovenskerry. "The old rock has got an uncommon visitor, I think," he exclaimed, as he rose to his feet, the better to reconnoitre.


All eyes were turned on the skerry, for visions of

wrecked vessels and valuable booty floated before the vision of the little crew. "It is only a seal basking," said one. "A child," suggested another. "A ship's sail," quoth a third. But old Maunce gave it as his opinion that the strange object was nothing more than a sheep or lamb that had been washed from the shore.

"If it is a *living* thing, then of course we have nothing to do with it," remarked one of the crew.

"Why, you don't mean to leave the poor creature to be drowned?" indignantly exclaimed Olaf. "And you don't mean to say you would bring bad luck to us by saving from the water a half-drowned animal?" replied his laughing comrades. The flush of anger rose to Olaf's brow, but Maunce laid his hand on the young man's arm, saying, "Your kindness of heart does you honour, Olaf, and not for the sake of an idle superstition shall the poor dumb animal be left to die." The skipper ran his boat alongside the skerry. Olaf jumped out, and lifting the lamb in his arms he returned to his seat amid the laughter and jests of his companions. "What do you mean to do with the precious kid now you've got it?" said one lad. "You will get as much wool from it as will make you a comforter," chimed in another. "I think the first thing to be done," said Maunce, "is to take it to the Laird, for undoubtedly the creature belongs to the Ness, and must have fallen over the low cliffs."

"I shall certainly offer it to the Laird, but I don't think he will take it again," replied Olaf.



"And if the Laird bids you keep the worthless creature, as it is most likely he will, what then?" questioned his gay companions.

Olaf's cheek crimsoned a little, as, turning to Maunce, he said in a low tone, "With your leave, I will offer it to your daughter Vaila; I heard her once express a wish for a pet lamb."

Maunce looked earnestly into the young man's face, and reading the secret of his heart, he kindly took Olaf's hand and thanked him in his daughter's name, saying he felt sure his girl would be proud and glad to receive such a gift from Olaf. The flush of gratified pleasure and love deepened on the young fisherman's brow, but his companions were too kind-hearted to take verbal notice of his embarrassment, and the boat reaching her destination just then, put an end to all further conversation. The fishers were speedily surrounded by their female relatives, who had hastened to the beach at the first call from the conch-shell. They came to welcome back their fathers and husbands, sons and brothers, and to assist in the carrying home of the spoils of the deep. Maunce Scholla was met by his eldest daughter and her two little brothers, and Olaf's mother was there too, to greet her son. It was a matter of much surprise to the good widow when she observed the little half-dead lamb which her son lifted tenderly from the place at the bottom of the boat, while Vaila's curiosity overcame her shyness for the moment, and she ventured close to

Olaf's side that she might take a near look at the animal in his arms. Maunce drew his boys away and would have liked that Olaf's mother had retired to a distance from the young couple as well. But the widow Suneva was not so disposed to leave the lovers to themselves, and therefore lingered by Olaf's side, much to her son's annoyance and Vaila's evident disappointment. Thus the little party journeyed until they reached the hamlet which held their respective homes, and then the brief words of adieu were said, and Olaf was obliged to leave the maiden's side without making her acquainted with the tacit permission which her father had given to their courtship. Like most lovers, Olaf was impatient, and his mother's manœuvre to keep him from communicating with Vaila did not improve his temper, and consequently its snowy hue was anything but improved by the mode in which Olaf tossed the trembling lamb on to a heap of soft peat dust which lay in a corner of the cottage.

Suneva was not long in observing the cloud on her son's face, so bustled about to prepare some food for him, speaking cheerfully the while of such trivial things as had occurred during his two days' absence at the haaf. When her little chronicle of events was exhausted, Suneva enquired, "What do you mean to make of that lamb, Olaf?"

"Give it back to the Laird, to be sure," was the somewhat curt reply.

"Oh! but he won't take it again, I am certain," lied the mother.

"Then," said Olaf, "I shall do as I promised to Maunce : I shall ask Vaila to accept it as a keepsake from her sweetheart."

Whatever Suneva might have suspected, this was the first hint Olaf had given as to his future intentions, and it went like a pang to the mother's heart, the thought that her boy's undivided affections were no longer her own. I said she was a sensible and religious woman, but she had her failings, as all have; she was jealous of any one who drew one thought of Olaf's from herself. Poor mother ! He was the only one left of a fine family—her latest born, and the namesake of a husband dearly loved and early lost ; little wonder that she held "the only one" so close to her bosom and tried her utmost to close the gate of his heart against all others. She did not reply to Olaf's remark, and glancing up to see how she looked, the young man was astonished to behold that his mother was weeping. "*Whatever is the matter ?*" he asked, with much surprise.

"Oh, Olaf," she answered, rising from her seat and throwing her arms about her son; "What will become of your poor lone mother when you take a wife to engross every thought and care of your life?"

"Mother, you know such a time can never be," Olaf said reproachfully.


"I know that when you marry I will no longer be the dearest object of your love."

"Nay, I shall never bring a wife to your house

against your wish, mother. Do not distress yourself. I shall not ask Vaila to join her lot to mine until I have your free consent, for I owe my first duty to you."

"Thank you, thank you, my boy! It will not be for many years that I will burden you, but while I live *do* let me feel that I am cherished before all others by the one being left on earth to love me."

Olaf did not answer, he had said a rash thing on the impulse of the moment to soothe a ruffled feeling, and the eagerness with which Suneva accepted the promise showed him how ill-advisedly he had spoken. The shadow darkened on the young fisherman's face, and quietly unfolding his mother's arms from about his neck he rose from his seat and busied himself in tending his mute and helpless *protégé*. His kind care soon restored it to its former playful and pretty appearance, and then lifting it in his arms he set out for the "Laird's" house, without exchanging another word with his mother. As had been supposed the landlord would not hear of taking the lamb from its preserver. He good-naturedly joked Olaf upon making such a fuss about such a trifle, and ended by saying, "Why, man, if it had not been for you the creature would have been dead. Its value is but trifling, so keep it for no other reason than that it may chance to bring you some luck or other, and thus prove the fallacy of that awful and most heathen superstition which says, 'No good will come to him who saves the drowning from their death.'"



Olaf thanked his master and returned to his home. He did not sleep much that night, for his thoughts were busy about the hasty and ill-considered promise which he had made to his mother. Vaila had been the secret object of his affections from his boyhood, and she had innocently told him of an answering attachment ; but it was only that evening that he had learned the sentiments of their mutual parents. His heart glowed within him at the remembrance of Maunce's cordial manner and meaning words, and he felt angry and hurt when he thought of the very different way in which *his* parent had received the intelligence of his attachment to the fair and gentle Vaila. To marry without his mother's consent was not to be thought of, and to give Vaila up was harder still ; so after much restless tossing of a tired body and anxious brain, Olaf resolved to see his sweetheart the next evening and candidly tell her all. Throughout the next day Suneva was more than commonly tender towards her son, but she said not a word that might lead him to suppose she was reconciled to the thought of his engagement, so Olaf continued moody and reserved, and when evening returned he once more took the lamb in his arms and left home without a cheerful word or loving caress.

Maunce Scholla's cottage was not a quarter of a mile from Olaf's, so the distance between the two houses was soon traversed. The hearty old skipper was at home, and right glad to see his

young favourite. Vaila was there too, and the "love-token" was presented to her amid blushing and incoherent whispers that meant a great deal more than could be made out. Olaf's visit was short, for Vaila was soon missing, and the young man speedily followed. He hurried from the cottage to the sea-beach, which lay a very little way below the hamlet, and at their usual place of meeting the maiden was awaiting him. A few sorrowful sentences served to tell Vaila of the trouble that lay so heavily on her lover's heart. Her bright smile and confiding clasp of the hand made him almost forget his care.

"We can wait, Olaf," she murmured, "wait and look up to the great God who has heretofore guided us with such love and tenderness. I do not despair of making your mother love me very much by-and-by; who knows, if I am *very good* she may come to care for me almost as much as she does for you."

These and similar simple but encouraging words soon revived the light of hope in Olaf's breast, and the hour he spent in sweet Vaila's company completely dissipated all his sorrow and anger.

The next day the boats went off again to the haaf, and Suneva's heart was light, for her son's parting kiss was one of perfect reconciliation.

Vaila accompanied her father to the fishing station, and stood on the beach, with her little pet lamb by her side, watching the fragile bark until it became like a mere fleck of snow on the distant

ocean. Then, when it sank and melted into the surrounding waters, and the eye could discern it no longer, Vaila turned to go home, and, to her amazement, she found Suneva standing motionless a short way behind her.

"It is not after your father you stand watching thus," were the first words the jealous mother said.

A soft blush flitted over Vaila's modest face, but she quietly answered, "Not altogether—I was thinking of Olaf just then."

"Thinking of Olaf! and you can tell *me* so? You are bold for such a child in years!"

"You know we are engaged," replied the gentle maiden.

"An engagement which can never prosper while a mother's blessing is withheld from it."

"But we hope *to have* your blessing, and we mean to wait for it," was Vaila's mild but firm answer.

"You will wait long, then," replied Suneva, who turned angrily towards her home, having been defeated in her project, which was to arouse a feeling of pride in Vaila's heart, which would make her renounce her lover. She parted with her young neighbour in anger that night, but methinks her words would have been more tender had she known what grief would come on the morrow to wash away in an overwhelming flood of anguish and despair the wrath of the previous evening.

The cotters were aroused from their deep and healthful slumber about midnight, for the Storm

King was out on the ocean, and his mad gambols reached the ears, and thrilled to the hearts, of the sleepers on land. The evening had been so fair and promising that all the boats had embarked for the far haaf, so that scarce a man was left in the island but the sick and old. The wild grey light of morning broke on a fearful scene; the cliffs were wreathed with seething foam, and the deep dark waves were foaming and bubbling and breaking everywhere; while along the rocks were gathered groups of white-headed men, venturesome boys, and frenzied, heart-breaking wailing women. What to them was the spray dashing up the face of the cliff, and drenching them where they stood! Those poor despairing creatures could see nothing, feel nothing, think nothing, but the *one thing*. Fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, out on that awful ocean!

The kind-hearted Laird had hastened out and was now moving from group to group, trying to cheer the hearts of some and soothe the excited feelings of others.

Presently there was a shout and a rush to the beach, for a closely-reefed sail had emerged from the mist and gloom that brooded over the sea, and was bravely holding on for the landing-place. How nobly the little craft rose upon the crest of the wave, how gracefully she curtsied down into the hollow, then rose again and proudly dashed the spray to either side, heeding nought, stopping for nought, but hurrying, as if pursued by flying



fiends, to the haven of hope. Soon, in her wake was descried another boat, coming on gallantly and well. The second was followed by a third; then there was a long interval, and then a fourth came; and then—no more!

Who can try to paint the scene which followed the arrival of those four small vessels. Of course it was impossible to say *who* were in the boats until they had actually touched the land, therefore *all* hoped and almost believed that it was *their* boat, and as each bark neared the strand a crowd flew to meet the men. *Some* women with tears and thanksgiving received back their darlings from the deep, but the *many*, alas! turned away to watch the next arrival. Oh! when will such things cease to be; when will the poor smile more and weep less? It is a cruel, cruel sea which girdles our islands, and that morning will long be remembered in Shetland as the darkest that ever rose upon it. Each boat which reached a station brought a tale too terrible to repeat. Each told of some fellow-skiff foundered, upset, overwhelmed, stove in! No matter how death came, every boat which sustained an injury was lost, and every man perished. No help anywhere! The death-cry rang in the ears of comrades and relations helpless to save, and where sixty boats had embarked, but thirty-five came back. The storm held on for two long days, but no boat arrived after the first evening had passed. Still the shores were thronged by heavy-hearted females hoping against hope.

Among those who yet lingered on the high cliffs were Vaila, her mother, and the widow Suneva. It was strange to see how different was the mien of each of those women. Poor Vaila! Her first sorrow had so crushed and torn her inmost soul that she stood like one turned to a stone. She never spoke a word or shed a tear, but only looked and looked with a startled awful wistfulness that was very affecting to the beholder. Her mother was roaming restlessly from spot to spot, talking and weeping by turns, often startling the eager watches by a wild declaration that she descried a sail which must be Maunce's. A few seconds of painful expectation, and the "sail" proved to be but a curled and crested wave. Still the poor creature would not believe that now there was small chance of Maunce returning. "He had been out on many a worse night," she said; "if weaker boats and less experienced men had come back in safety, of course he would," and so she wandered about, hoping still, and straining her eyes in a vain, vain vigil. Suneva, on the contrary, had given up all hope of seeing her precious boy again, and with resignation she bent to the blow. Still she could not bear to go back to her desolate home, and seated on a stone with her head bent, the forlorn mother lifted up her heart to the Friend who is never far from one in trouble.

"It is the Lord," she murmured, "I loved him too well, my bonnie boy! I might have known that the cruel sea which robbed me of so much



would never rest until it had taken my last and best. Oh! my God, forgive and comfort me. *Thy* will be done, not mine. I bend! I bend!"

These broken sentences Suneva repeated over and over to herself for hours, never altering her position, or taking any notice of the people that were gathered around her. Presently, as if some new thought had struck her, she started up and looked hurriedly around as if in search of some one, saying in a whisper the while, "Poor girl! Poor thing! It was hard of me to speak so; where can she have gone!" Suneva climbed to a little eminence close by, and looking around, she at last descried the object of her search, which was no other than the ill-fated Maunce Scholla's daughter Vaila. The gentle girl had wandered away (with no companion but the mute and timid animal which was now her constant follower) to a point which jutted far out into the sea, and she had seated herself on the beach, altogether oblivious of the fact that the waves were washing her from head to feet. Her dejected attitude and helpless, grief-stricken appearance fell remorsefully on the widow's heart, and hurrying up to where Vaila sat, she laid her hand on the weary head, and said softly, "My bairn, God has punished me and forgiven my hard words, can you?" A violent shiver shook the girlish figure; she could not speak, but clasped Suneva's hand in both her cold ones.

"Will you not speak to me?" pleaded Olaf's

mother. Vaila lifted her stricken face, and tried to utter some words, but an hysterical sob was all that burst from her lips.

"My poor bairn!" Suneva went on, "this is a sore trouble to you. I have had my trial before now, and God has shown me how to bear this, and how to see the bow in the cloud; but, oh, such a stroke comes hard on a young thing like you!" She folded her arms fondly about Vaila, and whispered in her ear, "My darling's love! My Olat's unwedded bride, I cast you off in the hour of my pride, but I pray you be my child now I have none else. *He* loved you well, Vaila, and his mother will love you too. My bairn, my bairn, you must console and uphold the *two* lone widows, and may God comfort you and us." As if to second this earnest appeal, Vaila's pet lamb laid its tiny head on the girl's knee, and bleated plaintively. The wail of her little favourite touched a chord of tender recollection. Vaila's lip quivered for a moment, and the tears so long sealed up came gushing to her eyes, and, as she warmly returned Suneva's embrace, she felt a ray of consolation enter her heart, which had seemed dead to all feeling so short a time before.

It was now the third evening since the boats had left the island, the storm had quite died away, and the darkness was falling fast, so that but a few of the bereft and heart-broken women remained on the rocks when Suneva and her young friend turned towards their dreary homes. When Vaila entered

the cottage, she found the children all in bed, and her mother bustling about putting things to rights, and making up a hearty fire, as she said, "just to have all things nice by the time Maunce comes." "Now, Vaila," she exclaimed, as soon as her daughter entered, "you just go to bed and get some sleep, for when I have put on the supper, I am going to run over the hill, and see if our men won't be coming from Burra, by the way."

"Oh! mother dear, are you still hoping thus?"

"Well, indeed, to hear you talk, Vaila! just as if it is not what your father has done many a day—run into Burra, when it blew too hard to make this harbour. I am as sure as possible that they have landed there, and will be coming now that it is smooth enough to cross the sound!"

"Indeed, mother, if such had been the case, poor father would have returned this morning, when James Isbester and his men came over."

"He might have been tired."

"Then he would have sent a message."

"Nay, now, Vaila, don't say another word, for I mean to go, and I feel sure I am right."

Poor Vaila sighed and wept bitterly. "At any rate," she said, "I will go with you, for I cannot sleep, and it will be but lonely here by myself."

It was almost midnight when the mother and daughter stepped out of their cottage for their dreary wander over the hills. The clear, cold stars were shining down on the sea, which heaved as softly and reflected their brilliant forms as calmly,

as if it were always as true and tender a friend as lately it had proved itself to be a merciless, all-powerful, and most treacherous foe. No sound was to be heard anywhere, save when the wanderers passed some half-shut door, and the moan from within told of the bitter heart-break some poor soul had lately felt. With their shawls muffled about their heads, the two passed rapidly on in silence. They soon left the hamlet behind and were out on the lonely moor, where the melancholy wail of the golden plover took the place of the rippling murmur made by the waves on the beach. No word passed between the two, but they walked very quickly, and the hopeful light in Martha's face almost woke a like feeling in Vaila's heart, so that both bent on with eager swiftness, peering far into the night—for what?

So wildly and so carelessly had they gone forward that it was not till nearly an hour had elapsed that they discovered by some familiar landmarks that they had gone in quite a different direction from what they had intended. To re-trace their footsteps and reach the opposite hill was the work of hours, for both were tired; and, despite the fire within, it was hard work to walk quickly over stony and miry ground. The dawn was softly touching the hill-tops when Vaila and her mother found themselves half-way across the common, which stretched for miles between their home and the ferry for whence they were bound. Poor Martha was showing signs of extreme

weariness now, though uttering no word of complaint.

"Don't you think you might sit down on this hillock, mother, and rest a bit?" said Vaila.

"Well, just for a moment," replied the mother, sinking down on the dewy ground, where Vaila would have thrown herself as well, had not her quick eye discerned some dim outlines of approaching forms, which set her heart wildly beating.

She stilled all outward emotion, however, and telling Martha to rest while she went on a bit, the heroic girl sped onward with swift and eager footsteps. The shadows she had seen came nearer and nearer, and at last she could see that it was three men who were approaching. A few moments more and with a shriek of mingled feelings Vaila had thrown herself into the arms of Olaf Oyason. It was only for an instant that she received his caress. With a conscience-stricken movement she turned to embrace her father, but he was not there, and the sorrowful looks of Olaf and his companions told her that she was an orphan.

"Oh, my poor mother," Vaila moaned, "how will she bear it?"

Her question was soon answered. The scream which had burst from Vaila's lips on recognizing her lover had reached poor Martha's ears. Too readily had she interpreted her daughter's exclamation into a joyous call of recognition, and with noiseless footsteps she had hurried to the spot to welcome back her husband. The mother's white and anguish-

stricken face was the answer Vaila received to her piteous exclamation.

"Mother, mother, don't look so," shrieked Vaila, and she would have clasped her arms about her mother, but Martha pushed her away, and, without uttering one word or sigh, turned to walk back to her home. Silently and fearfully the others followed her, not daring to address her.

It was a bright, beautiful morning when the party reached the shore where they separated to seek their several homes. Olaf's male companions hurried across the fields, and were in their father's house once more. Vaila lingered but a moment to say adieu to her betrothed, then followed her mother into the home from whence the stalwart form of the bread-winner had departed for ever. Suneva was sitting by her solitary fire, drawing comfort from the Book of Life. Her heart had found much peace while so occupied, and in clinging so close to her Father's hand He had shown her *His face*. A smile of peace and holy faith was on the widow's lips as she looked up, wondering who it was that came to see her so early. Ah! hold him fast, mother! Wrap him in those tender, loving arms; kiss the salt spray from his cheek, and read his face again and again. It is no vision, no phantom, but your very own son, your Olaf, whom God had sent again to shew you that your resignation and Christian meekness has found acceptance above.

The day was half spent ere Olaf dreamt of

leaving his mother's side even for a visit to Vaila. Then Suneva proposed that they should together go and see their bereaved neighbours. It was a threshold darkened by the shadow of the mighty spoiler's wing that the mother and son crossed on their errand of sympathy and love. The little children were crying in all corners of the cottage, and Vaila was sitting by the fire weeping as abundantly, but in silence. Her mother was reclining on the humble bed with her tearless, despairing face turned vacantly up to the rafters. Suneva spoke to her but received no answer, not even a look that might say that Martha had heard what was spoken to her. Then Olaf came and sat by her, and with tears that did no shame to his manhood, related the hair-breadth adventures he had passed through unscathed, but which had cost the lives of half the number of his companions, and one of those the brave old Maunce. Unmoved did Martha listen to the harrowing tale; unmoved she heard how her husband had been swallowed up by the angry sea; unmoved she heard the wails of her fatherless children—nothing could touch her now. The "pitcher was broken at the fountain." She but turned her head away as if she had done with life, and so in truth she had. A couple of days passed in that unnatural crushing grief, and then, without even a look of parting love for her helpless little ones, Martha went away, and the husband and wife met, after so brief a separation, in the better land. It was some time after her mother's death

ere Vaila fully realized the bitterness of her loss and the distresses of her situation.


Five helpless children to care for was no light task for a young and inexperienced girl. So many of her acquaintances were mourning for their nearest and dearest, that none came to offer help or advice to the solitary orphan. But for Olaf and his good mother, poor Vaila must have sunk beneath the weight of her responsibilities. One short year saw sad changes in the once happy household, and ere the grass was green on Martha's grave her children were among the poorest on the island. It is scarcely necessary to say how this change came about. Although Vaila worked hard, she was but one frail maiden, and utterly unable to take that care of the farm and live-stock which they of course required. The consequence was, that during the severe frosts in winter the ponies died one by one, and from want of proper precaution, disease got among the sheep, whose numbers speedily dwindled down to the "one pet lamb." Then the cows had to be sold to pay the rent, and to make the old saying, that "misfortunes never come singly," hold good, the bank failed wherein Maunce had kept his little savings, and thus his poor children were left utterly destitute. Vaila tried hard to keep up the fight against adversity, but everything seemed to go wrong, and her shrunken figure and pallid cheeks told a tale which words were vain to deny. Olaf did not mark this sad change unmoved, and often did he urge his suit and pray

Vaila to give him a brother's right to work for the children. It was hard to refuse, for her yearning heart pleaded strongly in the lover's cause, but the stern sense of duty within her spoke louder than love, and so Vaila put the fond temptation from her.

"Do not offer it, Olaf," she would say, "I have no right to allow you to take on you such a burden," and she nobly held to her resolution despite all that the young man could urge. There was just one thing of the past that Vaila still had in her possession, and that was the pet lamb: but *I* had begun a separate existence then, so can give no authentic account of what became of my parent animal. Perhaps you want to know how I became acquainted with all the facts of this tale; all I shall tell you is that "a little bird whispered to me," and if you ask me how I came to call a story in which I play a very small part by the egotistical title of "autobiography," I reply like the naughty children, "shan't know." So I am afraid you must just take my tale as you find it and be content. And now to return to the lamb. I had been shorn from his coat and carefully laid aside to be spun and knitted into a comforter for Olaf at some happy future time; but one day, poor Vaila came with tears, and opening the box where I lay in my embryo state, she took me in her hand, and sitting sadly down by her mother's spinning-wheel quickly transformed my curly locks into threads of the most minute and delicate texture, far too fine and airy for making into comforters, so that I at once

conjectured my fate would be a higher one than that of enveloping the throat of a sturdy fisherman. In a few days I was altogether spun up and twisted threefold, and then when all the children were in bed one evening, Vaila took out her knitting-needles, and the threads of white and finely spun wool begun to assume a new form under the rapid motion of the maiden's nimble fingers. It was far into the night ere Vaila laid her work aside and sought her bed, and evening after evening, the same thing was repeated. Sometimes Olaf would come in and sit by Vaila while she knitted, and then I always fared best, for the golden dreams of the lovers became woven as part of my existence, and I always found that Vaila made me of more beautiful pattern when Olaf was near. I was in her hands like a picture under a painter's brush, and when her thoughts were sad my pattern was uneven and ungraceful, but when rainbow hues danced before her eyes I became a garden of beautiful designs. Thus my growth progressed, until at last Vaila's task was ended, and I became like those of my sisters you have seen, a piece of lovely fairy lace which even the fairest of princesses might be proud to wear.

It was only when the last stitch was taken and the last fold made, that I learned what my fate was to be,—I was to be sold, and Vaila was to receive in exchange for me some little comforts for one of the boys who was ill just then. I was half fretted at thinking she was so ready to part with me ; but



when she wrapped me neatly up in a white handkerchief and dropped a tear on my graceful edge of pointed lace, and even gave me a parting kiss, I was quite satisfied and knew she was not selling her dream work without a pang. Ah! fair ladies, laugh if ye will! It was as hard for Vaila to part with this (so linked with tender memories and sad associations) as you would find it to be if you had to barter the ring of your betrothal for the necessities of life.

As the maiden turned to leave home on her generous errand, she was accosted on the threshold by an elderly man, who seemed a stranger to the place. He gazed anxiously at the wondering girl and asked in broken accents if Maunce Scholla did not reside in that house. "Alas, sir," said Vaila, "my father has been dead these three years, he was lost at sea." The stranger seemed much shocked and moved by this intelligence, and having asked permission to enter and sit down, he remained quite silent for some minutes and in an attitude of deep dejection. Vaila stood wonderingly, and presently her visitor asked if Martha then were not alive. The orphan's tears began to flow as she sadly told of her mother's death.

"All, gone! I might have known it would be so!" exclaimed the man. "Doubtless, my girl, you wonder at all this: did your father never speak to you of his brother Ned, who left home when but a boy and never sent a word to tell that he was alive, thus leaving his friends to suppose him dead?"

"Are *you* uncle Ned?" cried Vaila, in great excitement. "Yes! and I am punished as I deserve. After roaming the wide world over, amassing wealth and smothering home-thoughts until I almost forgot my mother-tongue, I rightly deserve to come back in my old age and find strangers where my kindred *were*, and graves where my kindred *are*."

Vaila's tender sympathy was deeply awakened at beholding her uncle's grief, but by-and-by, he was able to listen to all the particulars of his brother's death, and Vaila, glad of some one to tell her troubles to, artlessly related how she had struggled and how poorly she was circumstanced.

"That is all over now, my dear," said her uncle, "I came home hoping to share my wealth with my brother, but his children shall take his place, and in providing for them, I may perhaps wipe out some portion of my debt of ingratitude and want of duty."

The news of Ned Scholla's return was not long in finding its way throughout the island, nor was the fact of his wealth forgotten by the gossips, and one and all rejoiced in the great event for Vaila's sake.

A whisper soon got about that the faithful lovers were at last to be united in holy wedlock, and this report was verified by the fact of "Uncle Ned" freighting a boat to the little town of Lerwick, and returning in a week's time with a very suspicious cargo of feminine adornments.

There was an unusual bustle too in Suneva's cottage, and the good widow was often seen holding mysterious consultation with Vaila, who was seldom caught out-of-doors, and then in the most stolen way imaginable.

All this looked wonderfully like a wedding near at hand to the good wives of the neighbourhood, but all doubts were put to flight on Sunday, when the banns of marriage between Vaila Scholla and Olaf Oyason were called out in church.

And Vaila—sweet Vaila—did not part with her lace shawl, the work of her own bonnie, dainty fingers after all. Who was so proud as I on the wedding day, when Olaf draped his pretty bride, in my airy folds?—and thus I am still in her possession, and hope ever to be so! I occupy an honoured corner in Vaila's best trunk, and am never taken out of my comfortable quarters except on rare occasions when I serve to enfold a little bit of mortality on its way to be baptised. I perform the same office on the road home again from church, and then I am tenderly returned to my resting-place until—next time.

FOUR STORIES ABOUT A FAMILY OF GULLS.

I.—MAMMA KNOWS BEST.

ON a high gray cliff, in Shetland, a sea-gull once built herself a cozy nest of grass and fern leaves, and tangled weeds from the shore. She lined it with down from her breast, and sat patiently for several weeks brooding on her mottled eggs, until the little *scories* (young gulls) made their appearance. After that, she tended them carefully for, I daresay, a whole month, till the young ones were able to fly, and then the parent nest was too small to hold them, so the mother said one day :—

“My pretty children, it is time you were going out on your travels, but before I send you forth into the cold world, I will tell you some things that may be of use to you. You have often asked me why I built my nest so far from human habitations, and so high above the sea. Nay, it has even been a matter of wonder to you that I should choose a great bare rock, over which the bleak winds blow, when I might have had a snug corner in some tinted cave or grassy holm. And you have presumed to grumble because we lived so far from our winged brethren, whose homes you can see among

the lower crags. Oh, my little ones! you have yet to learn of the dangers that dwell around you. On that small green island you see lying north of us there once lived a gentle Kittiwake. She was the friend of my youth, and I had often thought of settling near her; but my plans were frustrated, as you shall hear. Kitty had her nest on a verdant slope, beside the shelter of a large lichened stone, on which she used to sit in fine weather and tell her children stories about the glorious sky we birds love so well, and the dancing waves, with their islands covered with fields of corn, and girt about



GLOUP HOLM.

with grand old rocks, and then the small Kittiwakes longed to be old enough to fly away, and see all those wonders for themselves. Well one day I saw a boat, freighted with strong men and sturdy boys, coming towards Kittiwake Holm. Those, cruel *inhuman* humans were laughing and talking much of the fun they meant to have that day, and they rowed their boat faster and faster in the direction of that little green isle. One of their number

carried on his arm a rifle, whose lightning breath has been known to stop the strongest flyer amongst us—in a moment to, and when the victim was far from the destroyer, and one would fancy beyond the reach as well. Poor Kitty had never heard of these things, and never dreamt of harm until she saw the boat stop quite close to her, and one of the boys, who had espied the nest, immediately walk straight to it, and tear from their downy shelter the nestlings of her care. Then did Kitty scream, and flutter above the head of the harrier, pleading wildly for even one little bird. I heard one man say presently, 'What a noise the mother makes to be sure, silence her, will you?' and then he who held the rifle aimed it at the trembling parent. There was a flash of light, and a loud report, and Kitty fell to the ground, fluttering her wings and gasping for breath. Poor Kittiwake! my lost heartbroken friend! if her home had been where mine is, no destroyer could have ventured near to ruin her.

"And, little ones, I remember once a seal who lived in the Helyar (a cave frequented by seals), near that dark rock below us. She was my especial charge, and I have sat for hours watching her as she sported about on a still fine day, teaching her little one to catch some unwary fish. When storms were out on the sea, my oily friend would glide to the inner recesses of her cavern and there await the departure of the hurricane. It was once, after a night of wind and rain, that I saw some men


come and lay a net across the entrance of the cave. I dreaded some snare for my seal, so called loudly to warn her of the foes so close at hand. She heard my cry and knew its purport, for she hurried forth from her hiding-place only to fall a victim to the same hands who had taken the Kittiwake's life. The young seal was captured alive and carried to the residence of an island laird, where it was tenderly cared for and petted by all the household. But Selkie pined for his cave in the rock, and his plaintive cry was ever an echo of his native sea, whose moaning surges swept around the walls of his prison. I had often seriously thought of making my home upon a snug ledge within the Helyar, but after the death of my friend the seal, I never went near the cave. It *looks* unsocial of me, I know, to stay away up here by myself, while my sister gulls, puffins, and cormorants are living so neighbourly and happily together in the cliffs below, but I remember once how some men came to climb in search of birds' eggs, and many a nest they ruined upon those accessible rocks beneath us. They espied me, brooding on my eggs, and they tried to scale the crags, and rob me of my offspring, but the path was too dangerous for the boldest climber among them to ascend. Then, when they found that that would not do, they went to the high land above, and they lowered one of their number over the face of the rocks. They were baulked in *that* too, for the cliff overhangs, as you see, and I laughed to myself as I looked on the helpless man dangling

in the air before me with only a frail rope between him and destruction, and I thought exultingly of my own strong pinions that would carry me so safely and so well wherever I choose to go. Well no one ever got near this formidable site of mine, so I have been able to sit securely on my eggs for many a year, and I have brought up a good many of strong young sea-gulls without any harm ever coming to me or mine—although my home is on a barren shelterless rock above the dwellings of my kind, far from green fields, bright holmes, or secluded niches, and open to the drenching spray and biting wind."

I will tell you more about Mrs Sea-gull and her scories, but in the meantime you must remember the moral of my tale. "What is, is best," you know, so try to be contented and happy whatever your home may be; then, if everything is not just as you could wish it to be, think of the sea-gull and be sure that all is wisely planned for you, and by wiser heads than yours, you tiny curly-pates!

II.—ALL FOR LOVE.

I promised to tell you some more about the lady gull and her young ones. I do not think I mentioned before that there were only two scories. The one was a timid, graceful female, and she was called Mawie. Her brother was a big, bold, bright-eyed fellow,



who was quite impatient to be gone on his travels, and did not mind a bit leaving his good mother and happy home. He went sailing through the air, and dipping his wings in the cool water, quite like an experienced sea-bird, and he laughed very much at little gentle Mawie who was rather frightened when first she found herself on a skerry far from her native cliff. But Mawie's mother did not leave her to shift for herself altogether. She kept near her and taught her many things, until her shyness wore off, and she began to find amusement in watching her proud brother fly about so freely and so void of fear. She even ventured to leave her mother's side for hours at a time ; but whenever the night came she returned to her parent, and they passed the dark hours together in the old forsaken nest. Once Mawie and her mother went with a number of herring-gulls to the fields inland, where the busy cotters were tilling the soil, and a dainty dinner our lady birds made off sundry grubs and worms cast up by the plough. The work-people were talking much to each other, and as Mawie kept very near them she could hear a great deal of what they said. They seemed to speak particularly of some one who, because He loved mankind, had died a dreadful death to save them from a sad fate. "I wonder, mother, what it all means?" said simple Mawie.

"I don't know much, child, and I am sure you would understand less," replied the old bird.

"But, mother I am puzzled to know how his dying could save others?"

“Don’t pry into mysteries, little one,” was the somewhat sharp answer. Still Mawie persisted.

“And then what can it mean ‘because He loved them,’—everyone seems to dwell so much upon that.

“Perhaps we shall know all about it some day,” replied her mother, “but don’t bother me now,” she added, and Mawie thought no more about the matter, for just then a large fat worm crawled out of a piece of turf at her feet, and the greedy creature was soon busy searching for it among the loose, dark earth, where it had hidden itself again. She caught the worm at last, did clever Mawie, and a number more as well, and then the whole flock of herring-gulls went home in the twilight, and had a grand gossip over the events of the day.

One fine May morning, a merry party of pleasure-seekers came in three large boats to admire the rock scenery where our sea-gulls dwelt. There were sedate matrons and elderly papas, and there were hosts of youths and maidens and rosy-cheeked children. There was also a large basket of cold provisions, and I am sorry to say, two very formidable weapons of destruction borne by no unskilful sportsmen. The hoary cliffs looked magnificent that glad day, for the ruddy rays of the summer sun shone on their giant fronts and crowned their gray heads with glory. A belt of mist encircled them half-way up, but those on the water could see the lofty summits of those lordly rocks through the cloudy veil, which only made them look more majestically grand. Upon those

rocks—in every hollow and sheltered nook, on every point and jagged crag—could be seen myriads of sea-fowl clustered together in picturesque groups. Some were brooding on their eggs, some were tending their young, some were hiding from danger, some were watching like sentinels over the others.

Some were feeding, some were resting, some were hopping about like “gentlemen at large”—and *all* were adding life and beauty to a scene at once romantic and sublime. It was strange that among so many birds our poor mother-gull should be the first to fall a victim to the “hunter’s might,” and yet so it happened. Little foolish Mawie had ventured very near in her curiosity, to see those who occupied the boats, and although her mother had warned her that there might be risk in so doing, the silly young thing would not be cautious. She flew very close to the boat which held the sportsmen, and one of them would have shot her immediately but just then the devoted mother, who saw danger to her offspring, came flying by. “I am fairer than she,” thought the parent, “and they will like better to have a full-grown bird besides, so they shall have my life for hers.” She flew nearer, and the gun was directed anew—there came a crashing, deafening sound, and a cloud of smoke which almost blinded little Mawie; but when that cleared away, and she could see around, the first thing she beheld was her loving mother, lying on the crest of a wave, and covered with blood. “Fly! fly from

here!" was all she could say. "They would have killed *you*, but I came between." She fluttered her beautiful wings for a moment in a vain endeavour to follow her young one to their distant crag; but she only fell forward to beat the water, and dye its limpid depths with the life-stream from her breast. A blow from an oar in the foremost boat soon put an end to her existence, and poor sorrowing Mawie flew away to the deserted home of her early days, and uttering a plaintive call for her lost mother, she cowered down on the empty nest, and sadly admitted to herself how very plain it was *now* to see what the work-people meant in the fields that day when they spoke of One who died for all—*because He loved them.*

III.—SELF LAST.

I DARESAY you want to know what has become of Mawie's big brother all this time. I do not know what his name was, but I fancy it must have been Booby, because you know a gull is, after all, a very stupid fellow. So we will call him by that name; and you remember Booby left mother and home very soon after he learned to fly. He never came back again, but went roaming over the world in a lazy, idle way, never thinking about any one but himself. He used sometimes to wonder if he would always live so, having nothing to do, and

nothing to care about; and I am afraid he rather liked that way of things, and became a very selfish bird indeed.


One cold night, Booby found a nice snug stone, sheltered by a high rock, and he thought he would like to remain there, so he turned off a poor little tern that had perched itself on the stone, and nestling his head under his wing he went fast off to sleep and never awakened until the broad day-light. Then he stretched his legs and pushed up his back, and looked about him, and he thought he must still be dreaming, for there were no rocks, and no sea near—only tall, straight trees and yellow crocuses, with a few delicate snowdrops, here and there. Booby wondered very much how he got there, and spread his wings to fly away, but found, to his great dismay, that his long feathers had been cut quite short, and that it was of no avail attempting to use his pinions, for they were disabled, and he was a prisoner.

Booby never could understand how it was that he became so artfully kidnapped, but *I* know all about it, and I mean to tell you. When he had fallen asleep on that big stone which he had so selfishly usurped, the frost came stealing over the ground and icing everything it touched. It very soon made poor Booby quite cold, and stupid-like, and then he tumbled over as if he had been dead, and lay quite still on the ground until some lads came past who found him and took him home.

They had been out hunting rabbits by moonlight,

and had come on Booby quite accidentally. He was quite stiff and frozen, but they saw that he was alive, though insensible ; so they took him and put him in a basket of hay. They then cut his wings, and seeing him give signs of returning life, they laid him gently out on the garden border, where it was cozy and warm, and where the rising sun could shine upon his benumbed body.

After his first surprise upon coming to life again and seeing all so strange around him, Booby walked about the garden on a tour of inspection. It had a high wall all around it, and one door so close and tight that Booby could not get even his bill through. By-and-by his captors came, and great was their delight at seeing Master Gull run about so briskly. They offered him some food, but he was too frightened and wild to eat in their presence, so they left him alone, and then he finished every morsel of his breakfast. He grew very tame after a short time, and would even allow people to come close to him and stroke his glossy back. He had a basin of water always beside him, and sometimes he was taken to a pond and allowed to wash himself, and swim about for an hour or two. One or other of his young masters came every morning and fed Booby with pieces of bread, or a little porridge. Then at dinner-time he had a hearty meal of fish or meat, and when it began to get dark at night, some one would come with a crust for his supper, and then he would give a drowsy co-o-o-o, and creep under a gooseberry hedge, where he would sleep soundly



till the barn-door cock's shrill trumpet woke him at sunrise. Oh! indeed, Booby might have been very happy and comfortable in that pleasant garden, but whenever he looked up at the bright sky and saw some wandering bird overhead exulting in its freedom, or when was borne to his ears the sound of many rushing wings as a flock of wild fowl flew past, *then* our poor prisoner longed to be free as well. His wings began to droop and his eye to be dim, and the memories of his native sea crowded back to his recollection with many a sad heart-throb,—don't laugh—a bird may have a sore heart as well as you!

His kind masters were not selfish boys, or cruel; but they were very thoughtless ones, and it never entered their busy heads to suppose that Booby was pining for liberty just as much as they would have done in like circumstances. But papa noticed the change in the captive, and drew his children's attention to the fact. Now these boys were very fond of their pet scorie and very proud of him, and it was hard for them to part with the bird which they had saved from certain death, and had since cared for so well; but, as I told you, they were not selfish, so they agreed to let Booby's wings grow long again, and when he was able to use them once more he should be at liberty to go away if he chose. Well! one day, a short time after this, Booby found to his intense surprise and delight that he could fly, so with a joyous scream of triumph he spread his strong pinions, and flew away to the

freedom of his native rocks, there to practise the lesson of unselfishness, of which he had reaped the benefit by the early end of his prison life.

IV.—DUTY FIRST.

YOU may be sure Booby had a wonderful tale to relate when he got among his brethren, and who was so delighted to welcome him back again as his gentle sister Mawie? She still lived in the old home, and now repentant, truant Booby, who had become quite a kind-hearted fellow since his adventure, went and stayed there too, and he told Mawie all about his garden days, and the boys who had cared for him so well. Then Mawie repeated the sad story of their mother's luckless fate, and when Booby heard it he thought he would never venture near men again. But then he remembered all his good resolutions about being unselfish and industrious, so he tried to forget about the personal danger, and sat for many a long weary hour in the cold and wind sentinelling the flocks of seals who were constantly sporting among the breakers. Often he ran great risk of being shot by the hunter or naturalist stealing along the shore, to get within reach of the unsuspecting selkies. But the brave watchman would give the alarm, and then the disappointed sportsman would send a random bullet after the faithful bird. I am glad to say,

however, that the deadly missile never reached its mark, and Booby was well rewarded for his courage by seeing the seals swim safely away. As I told you, Booby was rather a lazy fellow, and had never gone far out to sea. He liked better to stay and catch little fish beside the skerries at home. But once he heard a black-back say, that it was the duty of every gull to guide the fishing-boats to where the shoals of ling were best found,—to wait beside the fishers on the wide ocean and warn them of approaching squalls. To be sure it was very cold out there on the sea, and there was no place to rest but the shifting waves. Still Booby thought that he ought to go out with the other gulls and watch over the safety of the venturesome seaman. "It is my duty," he said, so he bade goodbye to Mawie, sitting so cozily on her eggs. And away he went "towards the open main," accompanied by crowds of brother gulls, and followed by many a snowy sail. Over the "waste of waters" skimmed the light-hearted Booby. Sometimes he would rise proudly heavenward, cleaving the air with his great powerful wings, then slanting down again, he would hover slowly above the head of some unwary fish and startle its weak nerves by suddenly darting down, and seizing it in his sharp beak. Then, by way of variety, Booby would skim along the surface of the sea, just allowing his soft white breast to touch the fleecy surf for a moment, then uttering his cheerful call, which sounded to the fisherman like some song of comfort and encour-

agement, he would wheel round the boat and listen with gratified pleasure to the thanks vouchsafed him by the grateful men, whose lines were covered with fish. It was weary work sometimes, and especially so when the fish *would not be caught*, and when days were spent in an unsuccessful hunt. It was disheartening even to a bird to see the boat turned gloomily homeward, and the weary wings of the watchful gulls drooped sorrowfully on the landward flight. But when a splendid "catch" rewarded the toilers on the deep, Booby felt rewarded for every disappointment, and joyfully led the way to the distant island brooding by the horizon. When the boats would touch the land, and Booby saw the fishers' little children greet the sailors with hearty kisses and merry shouts then he felt very happy, and would soar away to his pleasant home where gentle Mawie was still sitting true to her charge, and faithful to her love, and as he nestled down in the ancient nest and went fast off to sleep, he dreamt that there was more pleasure after all in doing his duty than in following the bent of his selfish wishes.

Booby's dream was to him something like the "still small voice" which speaks to a good boy or girl, and *tells* them to enjoy their play and *helps* to increase their fun when they have been obedient, and dutiful and altogether *good* !

I do not know what became of Mawie and Booby afterwards, but, perhaps, they are among the many of their kind who come to my home in the early

spring, and whose cheerful voices tell me that the long bright days are nigh. The sound of the sea-gull's cry is to us in Shetland what the cawing of rooks among budding branches is to you little English folk, and we welcome the presence of those graceful birds in our sheltered harbours, just as you rejoice over the first flowers of spring.

HAROLD'S GRAVE.

LONG, long ago, before the days of chivalry, when the valiant Knights of Christendom were acting deeds of prowess which were destined in after years to shed a lustre over the dark, uncivilized age to which they belonged ; even when heathen Rome was mistress of half the world, and when she was sending from her city of the Seven Mountains kings and rulers to every nation ; there lived in the cold dark islands of Shetland, a race of people as brave, dauntless and free, as any that ever breathed.

Ah ! could they—those fierce old Vikingers—now arise from their tombs and view the home to which their hearts were bound with true patriot devotion ; could they see it robbed of all they held sacred, how would their savage hearts fret and fire with anger and regret ! But the honest Shetlanders have no desire to win renown as their fathers did, and are as proud to call themselves subjects to Britain as their pirate ancestors gloried in declaring themselves a kingless, lawless people.

Yet there was something noble in the character of the sea-king, and we feel a something stir within us which sympathises with their wild adventures,

battles, conquests, and defeats ; and we love to listen to the strange and somewhat extravagant legends connected with a race of men almost forgotten amongst the nations of the present age, but who once gave laws and kings to mighty England.

The lonely islands of Shetland were among the favourite haunts to which the Vikings of Norway loved to resort, as a safe retreat from the enemies of all nations. On the shores of its solitary lochs they dug strange vaults, and on the tops of its isolated rocks they built their weird-like kerns ; and in those hidden dens they kept the spoil of many a southern foray. If the voices we hear murmur in cave, or "geo," could speak a language that we know, what a tale they might unfold ; but the grim rocks are silent, and so we cull the past from story and legend.

The frowning cliffs and restless billows formed a promising safeguard, and Shetland soon became peopled by the wandering sea rovers, who could well appreciate its value as a retreat offensive and defensive. Among those who had made the islands their permanent home was an old Viking, who had retreated there in consequence of some quarrel with the Norwegian king ; and as might was right in those days, old Hascoss thought it most prudent to withdraw beyond the reach of his enemy. He had been the leader of a pirate fleet and was well-known to the Hialt-landers who welcomed him as a hero among them. The king

who reigned in Norway at the time was one who acted the tyrant, instead of father, to his people ; and those of Shetland were especially oppressed by him. They therefore resolved upon taking advantage of a time when the king was especially engaged in quelling other disturbances. They looked about among their number for a fitting leader who soon showed himself in old Hascoss, and declaring him their island-king, they flung the yoke of Norway from their necks.

He was a grim old warrior was Hascoss ; and very different from the gorgeous palace of a modern prince was the home in which the " King of Thule " dwelt ; and yet his cavern-home in the hillside was guarded by true hearts, and he wore on his bosom as bright a jewel as ever beamed on the brow of royalty. Many a younger warrior coveted the king's great treasure, but the only child of Hascoss was very dear to him, and Nye had no desire to leave her father. So she continued to shed the sunshine of her innocent young life upon the path of her sea-king sire. There was a sly story whispered among the fair-haired maidens of Hialtland. It was whispered that, when on his roving expeditions, Hascoss had seen a beautiful lady who completely made captive of the stern warrior's heart. She did not care one bit for him, but as compensation for the chain she had woven, the rude lover bore her away to his ship, and, heedless of her tears, compelled his captive to become his wife.


" Low droops the flower in an ungenial soil," and

although the dark-eyed Italian learned to love the pirate, her heart pined for the bright skies of home. And so she died, and only her gentle spirit was near to guard from danger the child on whom her mother's-eye had scarcely rested. This was the tale that circulated among the Shetland damsels, who envied Nye her dusky locks and languishing eyes, which spoke of sunnier lands than Hialtland.

The Norwegians were engaged in fierce and civil turmoils at the time, or, as may be supposed, the daring conduct of the Shetlanders would not long have passed unpunished, but as it was, they were allowed to have it all their own way for a while; and thus Hascoss reigned in peaceful security, over his island subjects, for a few happy years. But the dark day was coming, and the old King began to wear a very anxious, angry look, and to wander by the sea-shore, looking on the far-spreading ocean with expectation in his eyes. One day while wandering thus with his daughter, they spied a sail which did not belong to the island, and which was rapidly nearing the shore. Hascoss had long looked for that vessel, and when Nye asked the meaning of the strange ship, he told her how the tyrant of Norway had died, and his son, a very valiant young man, had, by his wisdom and bravery, brought his rebel subjects into submission shortly after his accession of power as new master. He told her how this great Harold had sent to Shetland, commanding Hascoss and his followers to surrender themselves as rebels to Norway; how

a message of defiance had been returned, which it was feared, now when too late to retract, would only exasperate the king, and make the punishment the heavier. "We did not know, when we sent, how all-potent is Harold's power," said Hascoss, "and now yon vessel brings back his answer."

The ship had reached a distant point of the island by this time, and many people were gathering around Hascoss, who stood proud and ready to meet the strangers. Two young men landed and approached the group, and, as if by instinct recognizing Hascoss, as the chief, addressed themselves to him. The elder of the two was a tall and handsome man, with a face that spoke of exposure to many privations on wild and wave. His companion was quite a youth, with laughing blue eyes; and Hascoss flushed with anger as the thought occurred that the Norwegian king had chosen to insult them by sending boys as the messengers in such a weighty matter. But his northern hospitality forbade his offering any but the warmest of welcomes to his guests. The brothers (for such they were) did not choose to divulge their name or title, further than that they were the tried and trusted friends of their king; but old Hascoss soon guessed that they were of some noble line, and treated them with every consideration. Little dreamt the old man that his rude home was honoured by the presence of the great Harold himself, whose name had caused the inhabitants of many a home to tremble. Little did Hascoss



suppose that the "boy" Henrick was the king's famous brother, who had already won a warrior's place among the Northmen, and who now was stealing the heart of dark-eyed Nye from the old father who had held it alone till this stranger came.

Harold had been much astonished at the spirited reply of the Hialtlanders, and his heart had warmed to those undaunted men

" With the stern joy that warriors feel
Of foemen worthy of their steel."

"It were a pity that such noble hearts should bleed in such a cause," exclaimed the king to his brother, when he received the message of defiance. "I would fain conciliate them, I would fain spare the blood of such men." And so he determined that he himself should bear the words of peace and friendship. It was a hazardous adventure, but the warm blood of the young men rejoiced in excitement and danger; and thus it was that Harold and Henrick visited Shetland only as ambassadors from one court to another.

But something occurred which Harold had not counted upon before he set out on his strange adventure. With all his soul he learned to love the Shetland maiden, Nye, and although she had no caring for him, she turned with all her heart to the laughing Henrick, and this gave quite a new aspect to things.

Harold sought her love, and she rejected it.

Then he told her the secret of his kingly rank, and besought her to save her father and her country by yielding to his wishes. It was a brilliant life which he promised to her, and his astonishment was great when she still refused to listen to his suit. "If you will promise to be mine," pleaded Harold, "I will never again disturb your islands with my claim upon them." It was a hard thing, appealing to her patriotic devotion, but Nye felt that it would be a fearful and wicked deed to sacrifice her life, and Henrick's happiness, even on the altar of patriotism; and although she had never heard the wise warning, "Do not evil that good may come" she acted upon the sentiment of it, and steadily refused all the offers that the kingly suitor made.

After this, Harold made no advance to conciliate his rebel subjects, but simply told them that the king of Norway would send an army, to subdue them, and, in consideration of their known bravery, that army should not exceed their own in numbers. He and his brother quitted Hialtland, and the islanders knew that their next visitors from Norway would be "picked and armed men." Gladly would Henrick have joined the rash but gallant band who followed the father of his beautiful Nye, but he had pledged himself to fight and faithfully serve for Harold, and not even for *her* love, would he barter his honour.

A few dreary months soon flew past, and one day the beacon lights, blazed forth to tell that Harold's raven had alighted on one of the islands,

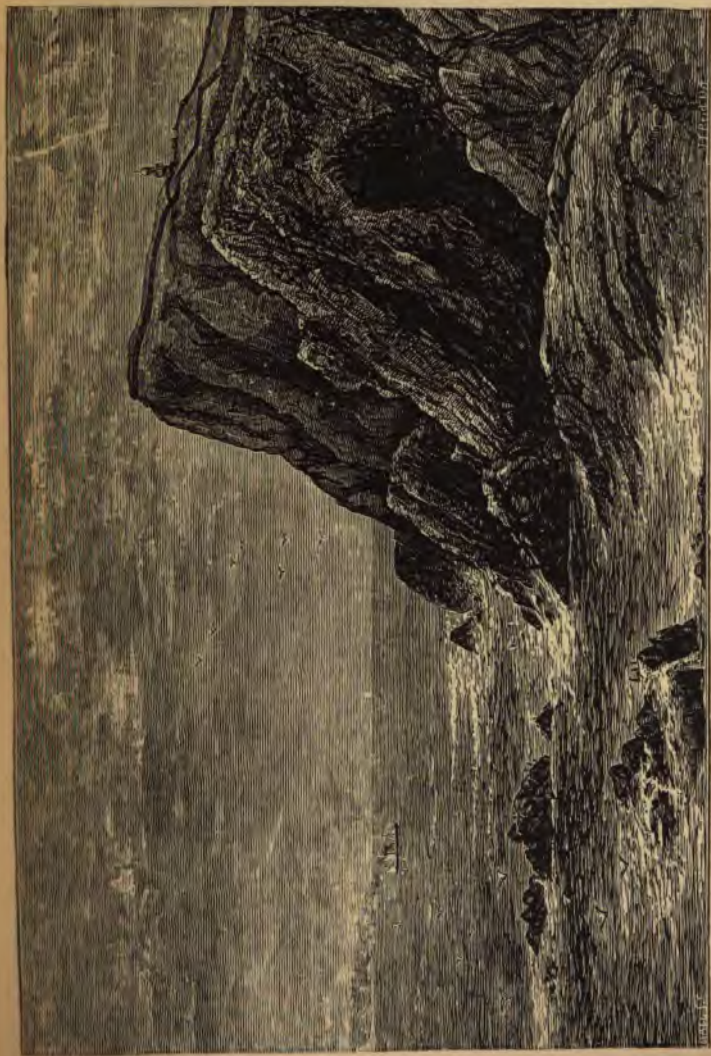
and that was assuredly the herald of a coming army. With a dark and stern courage, the Shetlanders gathered for the coming strife. They had few thoughts of conquest, for they knew how often Harold had won the battle from tenfold odds; but they hoped nothing from his mercy, and doggedly set themselves to "do and die." They took up their position of defence, on the side of a steep hill, while the Norwegians were advancing from the bay, where they had landed. Foremost among the coming foes, were the two young strangers who had so short a time before tasted of that hospitality, which is proverbial to Shetland, and it was only now that Hascoss learned the rank of his late visitors. Soon the hideous din of battle began. There was no terrible artillery, no bayonets, no muskets; but the graceful arrows sent by sure hands, dealt death as freely as musket or cannon; and the light spears, wielded by experienced arms, told as dreadfully as ever bayonet did. The Hialtlanders did no discredit to their former fame as fighters, and, on this day old Hascoss seemed inspired by the strength and courage of his youth: but, alas, they were no match for Harold and his well-trained all-conquering army of Norsemen. The first thing that chilled the ardour in the breasts of the islanders, was the sight of their leader surrounded, and the prisoner of Harold. Dismay filled their hearts, and turning their backs on the foe, they fled in wild confusion. A boy who had followed Hascoss through all the fight, had beheld his master in the

IN THE TOILS OF THE NORTH SEA.

(Reprinted by permission of Messrs F. Warne & Co.)

ALONG the quaint streets of an old Norwegian seaport there walked one winter's day two lads, whose gait said "sailor" plain enough. They walked arm-in-arm, as young friends are fond of doing. One wore the blue jumper and glazed hat of an English tar, but his laughing eyes and rollicking air generally would have betrayed his nation of themselves. His companion was just as much a son of the sea, but had not that amphibious appearance which marks *our* Jack. He was, in fact, a Swede. There was one thing, however, which both had in common, and which accorded ill with the dress of sailors in the merchant service, and that was the light step and easy bearing of lads born and reared the sons of gentlemen. I had better tell you the *whole* truth about this couple at once, for the worst I have got to say of them is only a little bit at the beginning, and it is best got over at first starting. Fred Harvey had thought and dreamed of nothing but ships and salt water since his babyhood, and the consequence was mad scrapes in holiday-time, a disgraceful "plucking" at Rugby, a runaway on board the "Osprey," and a tearful mother at home.



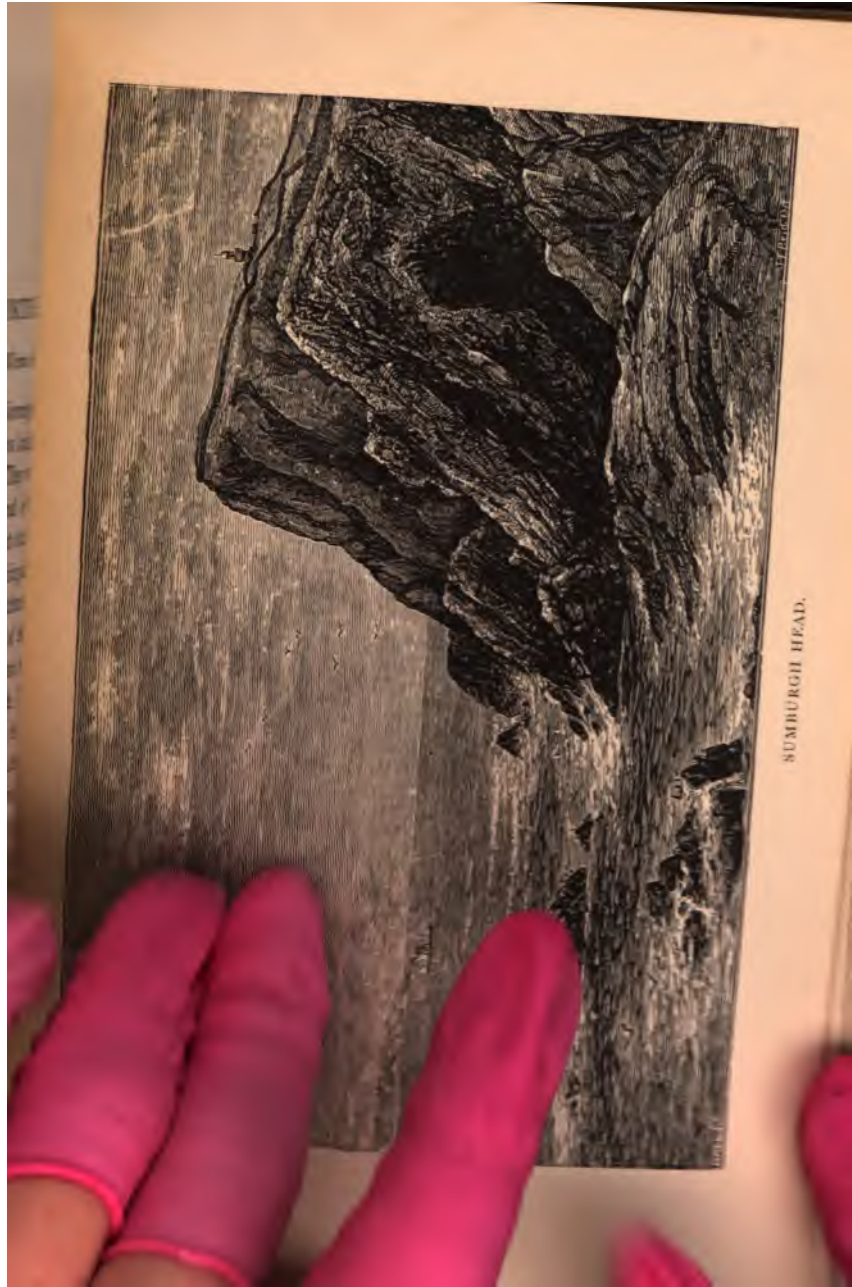


SUNBURGH HEAD.

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SUNBURGH HEAD.



Fred was not punished as we are told such fellows generally are. He was fortunate in his skipper, fortunate in his vessel, fortunate in his voyages, and, stranger than all, most fortunate in finding the life he had longed for realized in a life he could love.

Boy nature is the same all the world over, I suppose ; and while Fred was driving the cook distracted by sailing his paper boats in her tubs, an embryo sailor Swede was persecuting his sister by converting her work boxes into models of yachts. By-and-by, when Fred's exploits in the climbing way began to frighten his gentle mother into "bribery and corruption," that same sister in Northland was toiling over toy sails and cordage, vainly hoping thus to wile her idolized brother down from the house-top, where he had succeeded in contriving a perilous "crow's nest."

In after-years, when Fred's ungovernable passion for marine life put the crowning stroke to all his follies, and carried him on board ship when he should have been cramming Latin, Sebert, the Swedish boy, was stealing away in the moonlight, drawn by that same irresistible love of the sea. I think some drops of the old Viking blood had made their way to those boys through the pure veins of many ancestors ; for without being really vicious or headstrong, neither seemed able to conquer the overpowering impulse which led them to choose a "life on the ocean wave" in spite of all the wishes of friends or the love of home which both undoubtedly possessed.

And I would venture here to remark, that when young folks develop such a decided *bent* in a certain direction, it might be well if parents would gravely consider the matter more than is generally done, thereby avoiding the risk of converting a "mute inglorious Milton" into an unsuccessful stock-broker.

Chance—or what *we* call by that name—brought Sebert on board the "Osprey;" and instinct—or what *we* call by that name—soon made sworn allies of my two heroes; and now you all know their antecedents as well as I do, and I hope the knowledge will not do our sailors much harm in your estimation. Lads of eighteen are not generally dark, plotting diplomatists, and Fred's confidential confession, with its attendant resolution to make amends for the past, soon elicited a like return from Sebert. They thus became the sole recipients of each other's misdemeanors, and that circumstance became a wonderfully strong link in the chain of attachment between the two, so that "David and Jonathan" early became the names bestowed on Fred and Sebert by their rough companions.

They had made one or two voyages together, and at the time I spoke of them first they had done a good thing. They had visited the beautiful rustic home in Sweden where Sebert had sought and obtained the forgiveness of his father, and a sister's blessing to carry over the deep. As for Fred, I cannot say for certain that stealing a lock of yellow hair from the sunny head of his friend's near relation

was a worthy action ; but posting a scrawling billet-doux for his mother, with a thousand protestations of regret and a promise to spend Christmas with her, was surely a very good deed done ; and thus the couple of truants had eased their hearts of the load which, sooth to tell, should have pressed heavier than it had ever done.

The "Osprey" was an iron screw-steamer. She had made many successful voyages between England and Norway, and November was drawing to its close when our sailor lads walked the streets of Bergen, therefore it was reasonable enough to suppose that Fred's intention of making merry at the merry season with his friends at home would become a glad reality ; and many were the vivid pictures of Christmas in Old England which his words placed before the mind of Sebert, who had willingly promised to accompany his brother-in-the-future to that young gentleman's hitherto despised abode. Their ship had got in her cargo, and would sail at twilight, and although the evening set in dreary and wet, there was nothing in that to prevent the "Osprey" from starting. Therefore, her crew were all on board at the appointed hour, the steam was got up, the sails added for speed, and the timber-laden vessel rushed noisily through the darkening sea on her course home.

In northern latitudes the last month or so of the year is always a season of what is so expressively termed "broken weather," when wind and wave and fog seem constantly on the alert for prey.

Some spirit of the storm, shadowed in those elements, had marked the "Osprey" leave her sheltering harbour, and was coming on her track, a fierce sea-rover with speed of wing far beyond what she possessed ; but her captain, confident in himself, his vessel, and crew, kept her steadily on the way, notwithstanding the wild tempest which begirt them before they had been many hours at sea. When morning broke the coast of Norway was yet in sight, and all that mariner's wisdom could suggest had been done to guard the "Osprey" from her foes ; but, like Achilles, she had her weak point, and on that her wily enemy directed his forces to such good (or rather bad) purpose, that the shaft of her propeller snapped under the weight of a heavy wave as easily as a reed in the hands of a wilful child. The steam power was thus rendered useless at the outset : and, as the wind blew contrary, all that could be done was to "lay to" until the extreme fury of the storm was spent, and then seek the nearest harbour for repairs. Fred and Sebert made themselves very useful during this time. They had seen worse storms than this, and were expert in their chosen avocation. They were always the first to volunteer for any dangerous post, and their willing activity commanded the good-feeling as well as the respect of their companions, who had previously rather disliked the "would-be-gents" who kept aloof from the vulgar fun of the others, and whose superiority made itself felt in a hundred indirect ways.

But the storm had no intention of going to sleep in a hurry—wilder and stronger it grew. Pearl-grey clouds became inky black, broken here and there by masses of greenish blue and dirty red. Streaks of flame flashed out of the darkest, and all fled over the sky as if in hot haste to do some dreadful deed. The ocean took its colours from the clouds, and rolled its huge waves into valleys of sickly green and hills of froth-flecked grey. Then from the heart of that mighty uproar the gale put forth its many arms, clutching the wet sails with rapacious hands—clutching, and flinging, and tearing the “Osprey’s” wings into useless shreds of canvas. Alas! for the ruin done in a few hours. There were thirty stout men in that ship, yet how helpless they were in the toils of nature’s giant. How small the aid their hands could give to their labouring bark, compared with the forces brought against her by the North Sea; and when night came back, there was nothing left of the trim “Osprey” but a miserable wreck floating about wherever the cruel enemy chose to drive her. A consultation was held that night among the officers—if trying to make disconnected sentences heard amid the din and thunder of the elements can be called by such a word; but after all there was nothing beneficial that any one could suggest. Already the shattered rigging had been cut adrift; the riven bulwarks repaired as well as the frightful circumstances would allow; the vessel eased of such cargo as could be removed, and

there was absolutely nothing left to do but passively suffer and pray that nature's wrath might soon be spent.

Morning brought no change, and the day passed as the former one had done. As yet the sailors had all been on deck expecting their fate every instant ; but now a certain sense of security, born of the deadness of feeling which generally succeeds any intense excitement, induced many to retreat below the battened hatches, where the stupor of fatigue caused them to forget for a time the strain of the past thirty-six hours, and the peril of the present. In this manner another long night passed by, bringing no further hope or ease ; but the morning, as it lifted the veil of darkness from the dreadful scene, brought its own reviving influences to such of the officers and crew as were watching still. Among those, you may be sure, were Fred and Sebert. They had never left each other's side during all the storm, had never been far from a post of danger, and the thoughtful affection shown by both drew remarks from more than one rude tar.

"It's real beautiful to see them lads," said one.

"Seems as if yon Swede were petting a sister by proxy," said another.

"Fred's thinking about home, I guess, when he talks that gentle," remarked a third. And it was all true.

About the middle of the third day the wind began to decrease visibly, but the sea had been raised to such a pitch, that experienced seamen

knew that it would take days to allay its fury; and many an anxious look was cast upon the turbid waters, in the vain hope that some more fortunate vessel passing that way might be able to help them. No such help came. No land could be descried. They had been driven out of their course, and could not be quite certain of their whereabouts. Dark night came again—then morning—then night, and so on for ten weary, weary days did the "Osprey" lie a helpless wreck upon the mighty billows. An attempt was made on the tenth day to launch one of the life-boats, but she was broken against the ship by the heavy rolling swell, and a strange apathy began to creep over the greater number of the sailors—an apathy which yet seemed like a merciful indifference to the worst that might happen. I cannot imagine a more trying position than that of those poor fellows, chained prisoners in their crippled ship, the hour of doom seeming protracted by the mere caprice of the sea. How much better had been the sharp fang of a sunken rock, the rapid stride of a crested wave, the swift arrow of a thunder cloud; and oh! I fain would hope that it is not *often* that the ruthless ocean wantons thus with his victims. You will wonder how men employ the time in such strange and wretched circumstances. I fear we cannot have anything like a true idea of the grim reality. The groaning timbers to be caulked here and there; the loosened ropes to be coiled back in their places, from which the next roll of the vessel will displace

them again: the cold provisions to devour in snatches of time, the grog to gulp down; the hurrying clouds to watch; the heavy waves sweeping across the deck to be avoided; but, more than all, the wearing, woeful waiting, the cold and wet to bear, the future to think about. But the "Osprey's" men were like the generality of their class, stout-hearted, able-bodied fellows, who could appreciate the awfulness of their position without being morbidly alive to its horrors, or keenly sensitive about the death which seemed so near. Sailors knock about on the sea, in all weathers, meeting all sorts of adventures, until they learn to look with indifference on its dangers; and so it happened that anxiety and fatigue were the only tokens of weakness displayed in the faces of the crew.

On the eighteenth day from the time the "Osprey" left Bergen, a change came over the weather again. The wind began to rise angrily once more, and as it did so a part of the sky cleared up. The mist was partially lifted, disclosing land not far off. Land on the lee. Land rugged and rocky. Land girt by breakers, and sentinelled by warning beacons. Land wrapped in foam, and mist, and dreadful to look upon; for the "Osprey" was driving right on to speedy destruction among the crags of Shetland. Pale and stern, with the end seemingly very near, the captain headed another attempt to launch the boats, which were stove in as fast as they touched the sea.

Just then there came a cry from the little cabin boy, who had been caught up by a wave rushing over the deck. A shrill hopeless cry, and the only child on board was the first borne away to the mariner's shifting sepulchre. Many of those men had suffered ship-wreck in all its ghastly forms, yet felt a new and inexplicable chill pass through their veins when they heard the drowning scream of the boy, for it sounded like the herald of doom. "My men," the captain shouted, "each for himself now—the ship will strike before long, take what means you think best, every one for his own safety." A rush was made for the life-buoys and belts, and every man succeeded in securing one or other, except Sebert and Fred. With the instinct born of gentler surroundings in early life, they had hung back from the selfish struggle, and thus lost the chance which a life-belt might have given them ; but they followed the example of the others in divesting themselves of all clothing except a thin shirt and trousers. The men then crowded together in the after-part of the vessel, and waited in breathless agony for the moment when the "Osprey" should be flung into the cruel arms which she was nearing so rapidly. Sebert's hand was on Fred's shoulder, and he whispered, in his soft, clear, foreign accents, "Death is near, friend, God keep our souls." A child-like feeling of helplessness and trust crept over Fred's heart at those words, and turning round he ran to the bow of the ship, closely followed by Sebert. There, in sight of all the crew, the two

knelt down, and sent up the child's prayer to our Father, with hands humbly folded and faces raised to heaven in perfect faith. Every eye turned from the churning sea and black rocks to the lads; and, although their petitions could not be heard, every sailor joined in *the spirit* of that prayer to him who is all-powerful, all-merciful—to be trusted “in all time of our tribulation, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.”

At this moment there came a deafening roar of surf and a great shock, for the vessel had struck on a hidden rock and parted in two, cleft asunder by the breakers among which the furious sea had flung her. The after-part, where all the men (except our twain) were, fell back into the trough of the sea, and was instantly swallowed up with all its precious burden of human life. The remainder of the wreck drifted over the rock into a tiny creek, where, lurching over, the rigging which still remained touched the brow of a low cliff. Fred ran along the mast, quickly followed by Sebert, and both stepped on to green grass just as the bow of the “Osprey,” shuddering and groaning like an animal in pain, sank below the mighty waves. For some seconds the two stood silent, hand clasped in hand, and you will not think the less of either that tears rolled down their faces and no words were spoken. It was in vain that they gazed on the sea in hopes of seeing some of their late companions, whom they might try to succour. Not a voice was heard, not a vestige was to be seen,

for all had been drawn down with the fated ship, and had been swept away with the undercurrents, who knows how far already.

After lingering some little time to gather a degree of composure, the lads decided on a tour of inspection. They had not far to go to discover all that there was to find. They were on a small uninhabited island, about half a mile long and not quite so broad. The waves were rolling mountains high around the cliffs which begirt the greater portion of the island, and the short winter day was drawing to its end, which prevented them from seeing whether any other land lay near. Fred, therefore, suggested that they should seek a shelter of some sort, where it might be that sleep would come to help them through as miserable a night as any which had preceded it. They found a little roofless hut which fishermen make habitable during the summer season, when the salted fish has to be watched and cured; and, wretched through this shelter was, it seemed quite enjoyable compared with the exposed rocks and wet turf. Fred's stout heart was still full of hope, which did not fail to impart some energy to his more desponding comrade. And so partly dozing, partly talking, the long dark night wore on. You may be sure the dawn did not find the shipwrecked lads asleep, and how eagerly they welcomed daylight it is vain for us to imagine. When at last it came, the blessed day, it brought a bitter disappointment. No land was nearer than three miles, and although

the wind was rapidly falling, the sea was running so high that it was hopeless to suppose that anyone would be likely to see them on that isolated spot—even supposing there were people on the land which they so dimly descried through the mist and spray. Sebert sank down on the earth with a moan of despair. It seemed such cruel mockery that they had escaped the fate of their companions. But Fred was not so easily daunted. He tore a strip from his shirt, and, tying it to a spar which he had found in the hut, he climbed the wall and fixed his signal there. By-and-by they secured a few limpets, which, with a large draught of brackish water, constituted their dinner.

“Do you think it is at all likely that help could come to us here?” Sebert asked, after a long silence had passed.

“Well, yes, old boy,” Fred answered. “I don’t know the Shetlands very well. I don’t know its people at all ; but—well—you see—help *is* here as well as everywhere else in the world.”

“You’re right, lad. He who heard us on board the poor old ‘Osprey’ hears us here, and will do what’s right, so we’ll try and do the same as far as in us lies. I say it with reverence.”

“That’s well said, Sebert.”

And, while they spoke, the timber cargo of their ship was carrying the story of death and destruction to the neighbouring islands, and fishermen on the look-out discovered the signal which Fred had hoisted. Instantly the news of ship-wrecked men



on Tonga fled through the hamlets, and a noble effort was made to send a haaf-boat to the rescue. Those Shetland fishing skiffs are the best in the world for fighting with the raging waters, and, all honour to their manly hearts, the fishers were right willing to risk life for those in such a sore strait. But the North Sea had not played out his game yet, and, in spite of their utmost attempts, the boat was obliged to put back for that day.

Of course Fred and Sebert could not see that human beings were near, nor could they dream that anything was being done on their behalf, therefore night came again without bringing one drop of comfort or hope, save what their own sorely-tried hearts could give. There was a new trial to guard against this second night, and it required all the instinct of self-preservation which they could summon to compel them to take the necessary measures against the insidious foe who was now assailing them. Being only clothed (as I think I said) in a thin shirt and trousers, without shoes, socks or cap, you will not be surprised that the cold and fatigue were benumbing every faculty, and that the sleep which they before courted was now certain death. They, therefore, resolved upon taking it in turns to watch and rest. It required no little amount of determination to keep the weary limbs in motion, and the heavy lids from closing; but Fred and Sebert were courageous fellows, and thoughts of home gave them the extra nerve that was needed.

It was Wednesday morning when they were cast upon the island and on Friday another vain attempt was made by the fishermen to put off to their aid. On the afternoon of that day Sebert's strength became utterly exhausted. He was no longer able to drag himself from spot to spot, and Fred felt that he could not hold out much longer either. They believed that no human being knew of their peril, and they felt that the end of their sufferings must come soon. With little bits of sharp pebbles they scratched on the white stones, such brief details of their ship, her loss, their names, etc., as their rude materials would allow. Then, as the day-light of Friday faded away, they crept into the hut and lay down, quietly yielding at last to exhausted nature and the despair which must conquer in such circumstances. Heavy dreamless sleep fell upon both—the painless precursor of death. Night passed, morning came; but this time there was no stir in the hut, and no eager watchers to greet the day. The wind had quite died away, but the sea was still very heavy; notwithstanding that, a boat was coming, gallantly pulled through the surf towards the island of Tonga. At great risk to those on board a landing was effected—still no sound came from the hut. Up the beach rushed the anxious fishermen, then they paused instinctively by the doorway, thinking of what they would likely find within. Quietly, at last, a few entered, and, stooping down, saw Fred and Sebert wrapped in each other's arms, pale, motionless and — no,

thank God! not dead, but as near it as ever they or you could possibly be.

And so it all ends—for of course I need not tell you that warm jackets and whisky did one half of the reviving, and food and fire completed the job. Nor need I tell you that Christmas gave Mrs Harvey back her son after all, but unfortunately fond of the sea as ever, and determined to cross that treacherous North Sea many times and oft. No—yes—no—but, well I *will* tell you this one thing more. Captain Harvey, of a bran-new “Osprey,” takes his wife for many a trip across to her old Swedish home, and their beautiful vessel is always “dressed” and taken into Bergen or Stockholm by the first mate, who is called Sebert something—dreadfully unpronounceable, and which, therefore, ought to be unwriteable.

A YOUNG HERO.

YOU who live in yon great broad island, and only read of the giant-strife that goes on between your wondrous "wooden walls" and the wide, mighty ocean, can scarcely understand how much to be dreaded are the seemingly puny dangers which assail the Shetlanders dwelling in small solitary islets, and continually requiring to ferry the channels which divide their ocean-girded homes. Those narrow belts of sea fall fathoms deep, and are generally bound on either side by barbarous rocks, between whose iron sides that mighty pulse of sea sweeps with terrific force in one never-ending tumult.

It was on a fair summer morning that a tiny boat was launched on Blue Mull Sound, with the intention of crossing to Unst from Yell. There were in the boat two men in the prime of life, an old crippled fisherman, and his son, a boy of thirteen. The wind was fair—the bit of sea to be travelled not more than a mile in width, and the waves were rolling with an unusually placid motion. Lightly flew the little bark across her parent element, and pleasantly the fisher folk conversed about one thing and another. Soon the half of the way was left

behind, and then a slight change in the wind, and the turning of the tide, necessitated a "setting of the sail" anew. The want of all ballast should have made the men more than usually cautious in shifting the position of their sail; but whether they were more heedless than on other occasions, or whether their rigging was not in good order, or whether—well, it is no matter *now* how it happened—just as the sail was being hauled up, a passing breeze caught it in sportive glee, and in one brief instant the snow-white canvass lay weltering among the surf, forlorn and crestless, looking as a bright bird's plumage when drenched by a storm. Soon the keel floated up, bearing the form of the boy, who clung with all his strength to the side of the upset boat. He uttered no cowardly cry, but as he looked around he beheld the agonised face of one of his companions turned towards him. It was only for an instant that the awful vision of a "strong swimmer in his agony," met the boy's gaze. The tide was now sweeping down the Sound with headlong impetus, and the fisher's body was overwhelmed and borne away by the mighty rush of water.

Just then a smothered groan reached Johnny's ear, and, looking around, his eye fell on the poor decrepit figure of his father, who was feebly clutching at the stern of the boat. But the numb and aged fingers refused to do so stern a duty, and one more would have found a restless bed among the waves but for the intrepid conduct of a fearless

child. Careless of self, thinking only of a maimed and helpless father, and a mourning mother, the brave boy edged his way along the boat until he reached his parent's side. Then, with one little, strong, loving hand grasping the wet and slippery planks, and the other clasped about the old man, who was nearly senseless by this time, Johnny set himself to a dangerous task. Meantime the boat was being drifted faster and faster down the Sound, and if she was not soon espied from the land, and succour sent, the sea—cold, merciless, and false—would claim its own.

The shivering, weary child might well have saved his own life, for the young, warm blood in his veins held vigour enough to endure for hours and hours; and while the boat floated he would have held on, and in all probability would have been picked up by some one of the numerous fishing boats that were scattered everywhere about the sea. But the weight of a senseless man hanging on one arm, and the other bearing up a double burden, was quite a different matter. And yet the more tired he became, the more tenderly did Johnny clasp his helpless parent, determined to live or die with him. I wonder can any of you guess what gave the gallant boy the strength for so much? I know—it was the thought of his mother, and the petition which she had taught him, and which he kept repeating to himself, "Deliver us from evil."

I know God saw him then. I know that the good shepherd heard the whispered prayer which

He Himself had bequeathed to His little lamb; and, oh! I know, some fair angel must have been hovering over the sea, and "strengthening his hands in the Lord," else how do you think could young Johnny have held on to life—and the boat, all that time? And so minutes, that were as hours, sped on, and the hot summer sun rose above the hills of Unst, and looked scornfully down from his high place beyond the eastern clouds upon the tiny speck among the surges, and upon the little boy who was as surely guided, and as safely guarded, as the proud sun in his strength, and by the same hand as well.

In Unst a woman was busily setting her cottage to rights against the return of her fisher husband from the far haaf. The weather had been very fine for some days, and there was not a fisherman at home. A pause in her labours caused Grace to go to the door and look out on the sea, if perchance a sail might already be wending landwards. With her hand across her brow, Grace gazed out upon the ocean. Ha! what is that which is drifting, scarce a quarter of a mile from the shore and her home. Sometimes it pauses on the crest of a sunken rock, sometimes it dips lowly in the water, and again rises on the breast of an aspiring foam-wreath.

Is it some stray leviathan who has dared so far from his icy home? Is it some remnant of a gallant ship that may have met her fate by the inhospitable shores of Shetland? Is it some hapless boat?

Yes, yes—a boat, a boat—and human forms are clinging to it ; and a clear young voice now rings out a cry for aid as the shores of Fatherland are descried so near and yet so far. A hurried call from Grace brought a neighbour to her side, and a hurried consultation resulted in those noble females casting aside all feminine timidity, and boldly venturing to the rescue in a rickety old boat left on shore, as a worn war-horse reposes in the stable while younger and fresher steeds go forth to the combat.

Well ! my story, as you guess I am sure, is about done now ; Johnny was saved, and his father, and the good mother at home never knew how nearly she had lost both, until Johnny's own lips narrated the adventure by his home fireside.

But we must not forget that there was a sad, sad part to the story as well ; and, if I had not wished to tell you an altogether true tale, I might have pleased you, by saying that all were saved. Alas ! that white sail was the shroud of a strong, brave man. He had got entangled among the rigging, and was found in the boat sleeping sound, "the sleep that knows no waking." The other man, as I told you, was the ocean's prey, and well the old ravening robber kept his spoil.

You see it is not always strength, and manhood, and the pride of life that live on and triumph. The frail old man, who had sown good seed in the fresh soil of a child's pure heart, reaped the reward in a rescued life ; and the gentle stripling—a child in years and in strength—reposing, with a child's faith,

in the arms of his Maker, was borne up by the strong Hand which never fails the trusting heart of a believer ; and so ways and means, strange and seemingly improbable, were found to save, and Johnny rejoicing over a duty well done,

“Blest the God who gave
Strength to forsake it not.”



splendid a specimen of the "Tom Brown" as any heart could desire. Just the shadow of hesitation came across Mr Oyieson's face as he laid a hand on his younger boy's shoulder. "Why, Ned, what fun do *you* expect to get out of such an expedition? Surely *you* don't care to go." Ned was only twelve and delicate, but he turned his eager face up to his father's with such a mixed expression of pleading and anxiety, that it was impossible to resist his longing desire to join his elders in the manly sport more fitted to their years than to his. Henrick loved his young brother very tenderly, and begged so earnestly that he might go also, that their papa yielded that point as well.

"Well, well, off with you then. Take the small boat and old Bartle; he knows the rocks and caves better than any man about the place. Mamma will give you cold ham and biscuits, so that you may stay as long as you like. It is almost ten o'clock now. We will not expect you back till darkness or hunger send you. Be sure and bring a fine seal."

The sea-shore was soon gained. The old fisherman, only too glad to join in such a pleasant excursion, got the boat ready in a few minutes, and she was soon gliding through the clear sea as rapidly as a gentle morning breeze in a square-sail could bear her.

"I suppose we had better make for the caves at once," said Henrick, who was steering, and who was, in fact, the guide and chief of the little party. "You see if we potter along-shore after birds, the

seals, if there are any, will get alarmed and be off, but just now we may steal upon them unawares. This is just the time and sort of weather when seals are up basking in their *helyers*."

"Of course, you know best," said Stephen, casting a longing look at some cormorants sitting on a low crag to lee; "but I certainly don't pretend to know what your barbarous Shetlandic means."

"Oh, helyer?" laughed Henrick; "ask Ned."


"Papa told me it meant a cave frequented by seals," the little fellow chimed in.

"Most correctly stated, I have no doubt," said Frank, with the patronizing air which two years' seniority, and a public school, had taught him to assume, sometimes, over the *young 'un*. Then, throwing into his voice all a boy's fresh enthusiasm, he burst out, "Oh, if we could but shoot *one* seal! if we could but get the net across the mouth of the what-you-call-'ems, and pop in goes a big seal and a baby one! How grand if we *could* bring one alive for aunt to pet! We would have to kill the old one, I suppose. What a mat his skin would make for Mamma's drawing-room—oh, I say, we *must* though."

"I say, Frank, old fellow," said his brother, "it strikes me *you* will go pop if you rattle on in that style."

"Aisy, Sirs, aisy," chimed in Bartle; "we're getting near our ground now, and scories clanging,* or only noise, 'ill shune drive the sealkies aff."

* Young gulls making a noise.



The grim grand rocks were close by. Here and there a huge rent stretched from the summit of a cliff to its foot, which lay fathoms deep in the ocean, often widening a little way above the surface of the water into dark hollows, which, on nearer inspection, showed themselves to be caverns of various dimensions. These chiefly attracted the attention of our little party, whose sail was silently lowered, and the boat was pulled gently along, while Bartle kept a keen look-out over the bow for sunken rocks.

"This large cave on the right used to be a famous place for seals," whispered Henrick; "but it has been so often explored, that the wary creatures have deserted it for a less handsome but more unknown and consequently safer habitation."

"Hi! what's that?" burst from the impetuous Frank, whose quick eye had seen a bluff nose rise up a short distance before the boat, but whose quick tongue had not been gifted with silence—that certain trait in a good sportsman.

"Bother!" said Stephen, for the seal had instantly disappeared when Frank spoke.

Henrick, observing the look of blank discomfiture in Frank's face, here chimed in cheerfully, "Never mind; no harm done; it's quite as well; we could not have got a shot; but the beast has fled into that helyer, and we will catch it with the net."

Stephen and Ned rowed the boat right up to the mouth of the cave, which was narrow but very lofty. At the entrance, the oars had to be brought into

the boat, which the lads were then obliged to push along by means of their hands laid on the rocks on either side. A loud splash within the helyer announced the near vicinity of a seal. "Trapped, as sure as anything," Henrick shouted, for there was no need for caution then. The seal and boat were now both in the cave, and before another minute had passed, a strong net lay across the entrance, completely barring the way to the "free fields of ocean." The excitement among the young sportsmen was now too high for words, but their bright quick eyes were flashing in every corner of the shadowy cavern for a first sight of the expected victim. They were not long kept in suspense. In the further end of the helyer there was a small strip of sand, on which the light reflected very pleasantly for that sombre place. On that lone romantic couch a young seal lay ; but a glimpse of it was all that the hunters saw. The head of the parent appeared for an instant in the water, close by the sand, and the next moment the young one was off. Something just like a pang of regret for what was coming passed through Ned's heart, "Poor little thing !" he muttered, then blushed, and hoped no one had overheard him.

"We'll have it all as you wished, Frank," Henrick joyously exclaimed ; "the old one was keeping watch outside, while her *blessed baby* took a nap, but seeing us come, she went home to fetch it out of harm's way, and a *little* too late—for *we* have the latch key, old lady."

A vehement struggling at the mouth of the helper here drew their attention. The boat was soon there, when it was discovered that in attempting to escape, the "baby" had got entangled in the meshes of the net. It was not a very young seal, but easily captured in its defenceless condition. Old Bartle would have killed it at once, but was prevented by Henrick; who had often wished to possess a live sealkie. "Ye'll bring us bad luck," was the protest of the fisherman, but his superstitious remark was greeted by young England with loud laughter, so the "water baby" secured in the bottom of the boat, the net again carefully adjusted, and the eager sportsmen once more on the look-out for a prize.

Meanwhile, the parent animal, true to the highest of all instincts, kept returning to the close vicinity of the boat which held her young, but so instantaneous with its *dis*-appearance was the *ap*-pearance of her head above the surface of the water, that no one got even a chance of a shot, although three young were ready to salute her at any moment. Frank's small stock of patience began to ebb.

"Couldn't I aim at the spot she goes down at?" he asked.

"Perfectly useless," said Henrick; "you see she always bobs up facing us, and it isn't any manner of use firing in a seal's face. She can dive beyond harm's way on the flash."

"Couldn't we drive her towards the net, and then we might get a hit at her in an unwary moment,"

suggested Stephen. "Not a bad thought." So a look-out was kept until the rippling of the water betrayed the whereabouts of the anxious mother, then the boat was put between her and the recesses of the cavern and consequently rowed across it, each time drawing nearer to the entrance. The plans succeeded, for when the animal next rose she was quite close to the net. But the fate of her offspring had evidently taught her a lesson, and the poor seal could now and then be seen gliding towards the net, then dashing aside as if perfectly aware of what would befall her should she attempt to escape in that direction. The hunt had now become most exciting, and the faces of all were flushed with anxious pleasure. Even Ned would not allow himself to glance at the forlorn captive whose occasional moans of distress, so like the cry of a frightened child, had been touching his heart rather sorely. As Stephen had thought, the seal became less cautious, the superior wisdom of her adversaries having become more evident, and in her first unguarded moment Henrick's gun poured a deadly charge into her side. Desperately wounded, hopeless now for her young, wild with pain, the poor creature dived under the boat, and a red streak staining the water as she fled, showed her rushing madly into the further recesses of her home. The boat followed swiftly, and passed through a second arch into a smaller cave. Keeping in the blood-stained wake, and all unconscious of everything but their game, the hunters shortly found

themselves in yet another cave quite as large as the first. Here they gained the reward of so much perseverance and address, for the dying seal rose to breathe so slowly and carelessly that Stephen's gun put a speedy end to her troubles, and she was soon hauled into the boat a motionless lump of blubber. Many were the exclamations of delight at their wonderful success, and not until the prize had been often contemplated with much satisfaction, could the lads give a thought to anything else. But their attention was presently called to the beauty and novelty of the cavern into which they had been led.

"I never knew there was such a place," said Henrick; "did you Bartle?"

"Na, sir, we aye kent them helyers had mair than ae room, but it's no' in my line ta *traveeze* among rocks, an' it's no' just safe either."

"Safe—how?"

"Weel, ye see, the tide comes high, shutting up the mouths o' helyers; an' the swell will aften rise sudden, an' toss a boat ta bits upo' the rocks as if she were an egg scurm,* an' what should tak' the likes o' me here?"

"Verily, mine ancient friend," quoth Frank, merrily, "your words are wise, and as there is nothing now to keep the likes o' *us* here, we'll e'en skedaddle."

There were a number of arches around the sides of that ocean hall, and after duly admiring its many

* Egg-shell.

beauties, Henrick steered his boat for the opening through which a subdued light seemed to point the way out. The second cave was soon gained and passed, but the third which they entered was most assuredly *not* the helyer which had witnessed the capture of the baby seal.

"Where in the world have we got to now?" they all exclaimed at once.

Looking back to the entrance through which they had come, no light could be discerned, but before them a broad streak of sunshine illumined the whole cavern, and still seemed to point to the outer day. Towards that, therefore, they continued to move, but the further they progressed the more it seemed to retreat, and at last they discovered that the sunlight was falling from a rift in the rocks far over head, and that their boat had been passing through a winding watery corridor which seemed interminable and having no outlet but dark helyers, where a thousand sealkies might have wandered safe from all chance of capture.

Stephen drew in his oar; Henrick stood up in the stern; Frank and Ned paused in their rowing, and looked to their leader. Old Bartle was the first to speak. "We'll be like ta *will*, sirs, if we gang ony mair this gait."

"I suspect we have pretty well *wilt* already," said Henrick.

"Bother your Shetland rubbish!" Frank interrupted. "What do we know about *will* and *wilt* except what Ned's dumb-founded face tells us."

"It just means," Henrick steadily replied, "nothing more or less than the truth: we have lost our way."

"Well, and can't we go back the road we came, and find it again."

"Which would you say was the road *back*?"

To this question there was no answer. On every side passages seemed to lead somewhere, but no one could venture to affirm which lay in the right direction, and a blank dismay was the only expression seen on countenances so lately filled with nothing but pleasure and triumph. Stephen, always the calmest of the youths, was the first to break a most uncomfortable silence. "The trappers trapped," he quaintly remarked; then added, "come, have *you* no plan to suggest, Henrick, how we may get out of this seal's web?"

"We cannot stay here forever, that's certain," replied his cousin, "so perhaps our best plan will be to move forward along the most likely-looking vault, and see what comes of it, eh, Bartle?"

"Well, sir, I keen* no. Wan thing ye'd better do first, mak' an end o' that whimpering 'thing,' pointing to the young seal at his feet.

"Oh no! oh no!" cried Ned, and truly none of the four felt inclined to do murder in cold blood, as Frank called it, however eager they had been in pursuing and killing the parent animal.

"What is your fancy about the sealkie, Bartle?" queried Henrick.

"Fancy or na fancy, my dear sir, na body ever

* I know not.

took a living uncanny thing into their boat without some misfortune happening. They do say that seals are but evil spirits bund tae a form o' flesh, but be that as it may we may as weel give up at wance, for as lang as we hae yon thing living aboard we'll no' get out o' this."

"Give up!" Stephen retorted manfully; "I don't know what you Shetland folks talk about sometimes, but I know this, Englishmen don't and won't learn a meaning for *give up*, nor do they allow superstition to influence their actions" (he had observed some little hesitation in Henrick's manner) "come along, boys, let's try something."

Something *was* tried, firstly in the form of ham and buscuit, for the day was far advanced as their watches told; secondly in attempting an escape through one of the passages, but it narrowed and darkened so completely that they were obliged to return to the starting-point. Another was tried, and another, but all seemed to end in the same way, and the courage of Bartle and the younger boys was failing rapidly.

"I don't care," said Stephen, with determination, after a last fruitless attempt had been made; "we came here somehow, and we will try every opening till we hit the true one."

"All right, old fellow," cheerfully answered Henrick; "nothing like English pluck."

"Stay," called out Bartle hurriedly, "will it no' be tide turn now? perhaps we came in wi' the ebb

at four o'clock, and the sea will hae risen in the caves."

This was a new idea and startling; therefore the rocks were marked, watched, and too certainly proved to be disappearing under the rising waves. "We dare not attempt moving out now," said Henrick.

"How long shall we have to wait?" asked Frank.

"A few hours only after high water, *if the wind keeps quiet.*"


They all fully comprehended the significance of that latter clause, so seldom do the breakers rest from their chafing mood in such a spot, and none could help shuddering as they gazed around the grim walls of their prison and fancied the night gale rushing in, tossing the waves to the vaulted roof, and dashing their frail boat into atoms, while they,—ah! what a death in the cold dark depths of that horrid place. The lads had manfully tried to laugh away the thoughts of danger while action was left them, but now their doom seemed to stand plainly before their view.

"Poor dear Mamma," whispered Ned, with something very like tears in his voice, if not in his eyes.

Henrick turned quickly round on his brother: "Little man, I should not have brought you with us, come here," and he took the boy into his strong arms, as if that would save him, while through his mind there passed a fantastic thought of Judah and

Benjamin journeying to Egypt, and he wondered whether their own story would end as happily as did that rarely beautiful tale of old.

The night came slowly down, and the darkness gathered in the recesses of that fearful spot. Shadows fell from the frowning rocks, and scarcely a word or sound broke the silence of hours save the monotonous roar of the mighty deep which echoed through the vaulted caverns like the voice of many thunders. Now and again the little captive gave forth a plaintive wail, and had it not been that they knew it could not live without its mother, its captors would have *now* consigned it to the sea again with much pleasure. As the morning dawned the waves began a restless moaning, like giants waking from a troubled sleep, and the brave lads who had passed through those trying hours of passive endurance with such steady courage, began to brace their minds for what they had all along feared the most, a storm before the ebbing tide could come to give them a chance of escape. Old Bartle had become so bewildered by fear and cold that he had sunk half-dozing into the bottom of the boat, and was of no use whatever; therefore Henrick and Stephen began to consult with each other on the possibility of preserving the boat, upon the safety of which their own lives depended. They had already agreed that when the worst should come, an attempt must be made to clamber on to some shelving cliff, where they might perhaps be sheltered from the fury of the sea for a time,



but there seemed no spot where the boat could be secure.

"Papa will have taken alarm long ago," Henrick said, "and will not stop searching for us until the storm drives him home; who knows how near us he may be?"

"I suppose shouting would make no difference."

"Try," the united clamour of their voices rang through the vaults, but louder far was the mocking roar of the surf.

"Firing off our guns," next suggested Stephen, whose indomitable perseverance was not to be daunted.

"Worst of all—the first shot would bring down those loose rocks about our heads."

Already the swell came rolling high, then drawing the boat in its backward rush with such a vehement sweep as made it a matter of difficulty to keep her from striking on the rocks.

"Shall we try leaving the boat now?" Stephen said, as a heavier wave than any bore them through the narrow way into another and smaller cave.

"We are quite as safe in her, I fear," Henrick answered, after a moment's anxious thought; "the storm will tear the very crags from their places, and we could not long hold on to those slippery ledges. Let us go down together," and with pale, steady lips he kissed the young brother still lying in his arms.

Just then there came a lull in the rising tempest, a sudden calm in the rush of the waters.

"Now would be our chance," muttered Stephen, "if we only knew the way out."

Ah! that *if*! before they had time to make up their minds in which direction to venture proceeding, the gale rose again, and once more they were dragged along by the all-powerful arms of the monarch sea. Death seemed now so near that the two elder boys could only exchange a grasp of the hand, then fold their brothers in their arms and whisper a prayer to Him who hears alike the raging tempest and the still voice.

Again a lull came, as if the storm-fiend were tantalising its victims as the Red Indians do when they hurl the tomahawk so close to their fettered captive that it passes through his waving hair leaving the skin unscathed. In fact the gale was only rising fitfully as yet, and what it would be when lashed into full fury, those who were so strangely cast upon its mercy would never know. The Sealkie, whose presence in their little bark had been forgotten, now made itself remembered by giving utterance to the most mournful cries of distress. Even Bartle was roused from his stupor by the moans of the poor thing, on whom a long fast was beginning to tell most painfully. Starting up from his place, the fisherman called out wildly. "For ony sakes, dear maister, pit yon frae wis (put that from us); I tell ye we'll a' be smoared together if we keep it langer, for sure enough the evil spirit in it has brought a' this upo' wis. Kill it, or let it gang," and his trembling hands began attempting

to untie the cords which fastened the sealkie to the boat.

"What would become of the poor mite if we did set it adrift?" asked Frank.

"Henrick," Ned suddenly exclaimed, "wouldn't the seal make off to his own helyer if we let him go?"

"I suppose it would. It would seek the light and open sea by instinct, but I fear it could not live long without its mother."

"*But mightn't we go after it?*" Ned's face was all a glow as a brilliant idea took shape in his mind, and he could scarcely get words uttered fast enough. "Could we not fasten it to the boat and make it guide us out?"

"Splendid! splendid!" they all cried, and the "baby" was hastily lifted from its uncomfortable prison, a fishing-line securely fastened to one of its "flippers," (notwithstanding sundry vigorous struggles and harmless snaps administered to its tormentors with a hearty good will) and its slippery person dropped over the bow into the sea. With a graceful motion the sealkie glided swiftly through the agitated waves, drawing out the line to its utmost length, and towing the boat as easily as if it had been a sea-gull freely following his amphibious friend. A painful suspense was the only sensation felt by the five adventurers as they proceeded in that extraordinary manner. Cave after cave was passed through, and winding ways which became quite bewildering. The sea and wind seemed to

have paused for a time from their strife, and yet the boat was often almost buried in the surf which seethed around her as she flew through those perilous halls. Every instant seemed an age, till suddenly the precious light of day shone around, and they were in the helyer where their pilot had first been seen and captured.

A thrilling shout, then a moment of silent thanksgiving. These were instantly followed by the setting at liberty of the poor sealkie ; and hasty preparations were made for a dangerous scud home, as the wind was rapidly rising again. Every energy was given to trimming the sail and guarding against the perils yet to be gone through, although those seemed light compared with what had already been conquered. The breeze though strong, blew in a favourable direction, and Henrick, as he settled himself at the tiller, glanced confidently at his ready comrades and staunch little craft, then turning round he shouted back to the roaring sea and gale. "It's a *fair* fight now, and my bonnie boat has beat you when your temper was fiercer than now—drive us as fast as you will, for its hame—hame—hame ! that we soon will be."

SHETLAND GIANTS.

I HAVE vainly striven to find out the antecedents of two Norse giants, Herman and Saxie, but the wisest of our modern Scalds cannot tell me more than "there were once two giants," &c. &c. This legend must therefore commence where and how all its kindred begin.

There were once two giants, and they lived in the island of Unst—the most northern of the Shetland group. I scarcely think they were related to each other for their characters were very different.

Saxie was a rough blustering blundering fellow of over-bearing temper, and utterly void of all sensibility. He was fond of fighting and fond of eating. He was on intimate terms with the Northwind, the Stormfiend, and all other powers of darkness, and there is no knowing how far he might have been led into evil courses productive of endless misery to the natives of Unst had not a benevolent Trow obtained authority to restrict the giant's perigrations within the limits of Saxafjord.

Herman was a placid poetical giant, who liked to be out on the hillside and talk to the moon. He adored the Aurora Borealis, and learned from it the graceful arts of music, painting, and motion. He made friends with men, and was a general

plan. She always reclined upon the south side of the little Isle during the *day*, when Saxie could growl forth his admiration to his heart's content. Then when evening fell, and the rude son of Thor had gone for comfort to his Kettle, the piscatorial coquette stole round to the northern limit of the Utsta and listened to the sighs of Herman.

This double game was played successfully for a long time, but was brought to a close, like most things of the sort, by a trifling mischance. Saxie's love (or hunger) kept him awake one night, and all was discovered.

The roar he gave shook the hills and sent the waves toppling each other over in their scurry across the fiord. The mermaid gave one startled glance towards Saxafiord, and, divining the truth, sought refuge in her coral halls below the sea. In other words, the lady left the rivals to mend the matter as they pleased! Up in his huge hands, Saxie caught a great boulder of rock, and flung it with all his might, but it fell into the sea. Herman's placid nature was stirred to its depths, for the jealous fiend had possession of him also, and tearing a crag from its bed of ages, he hurled it at his rival. The gigantic missile dropped upon the lower cliffs of Saxafiord. Blind with passion, mad with hate, wounded by love, torn by jealousy, the giants foamed and roared and flung the rocks, and would certainly have killed each other before long if a witch had not opportunely arrived on the scene. She had long hoped for such a chance as the pre-

sport of dainty little fairies. An arm of the Northern ocean runs far inland parting the two small promontories by an eternal gulf of waves, but before the sea enters the sides of the fiord it circles a small green islet, lying about a mile due north from the mainland, and known by the name of the Utsta.

Now Saxie and Herman, though they had few sympathies in common, beyond their giant nature, were yet very good friends; although I do not think they were on visiting terms, as the visiting could only be on Herman's side, but they would often hold lengthy conversations across the fiord, the mighty sound of their voices being often mistaken for the shriek of the north-wind, or the roar of old ocean's self.

But to the two giants, as to all other creatures, came *the influence* which sets everybody by the ears sooner or later. Herman and Saxie fell in love! Saxie's notion was to eat HER. Herman's idea (with less common sense and more of human nature in it,) was to enshrine HER. That both were, hopelessly, victims to the tender passion could not be doubted. The lovely being who had enthralled the giants was a mermaid who oftentimes came up to comb her green locks on the Utsta. She was not a daughter of Eve, of course, but a woman in her nature for all that, and she was not long in discovering that she had got two new lovers. She did not care one bit for either, but such a chance for flirtation could not be passed, and it is pleasant to be courted. The mermaid hit upon a novel (?)

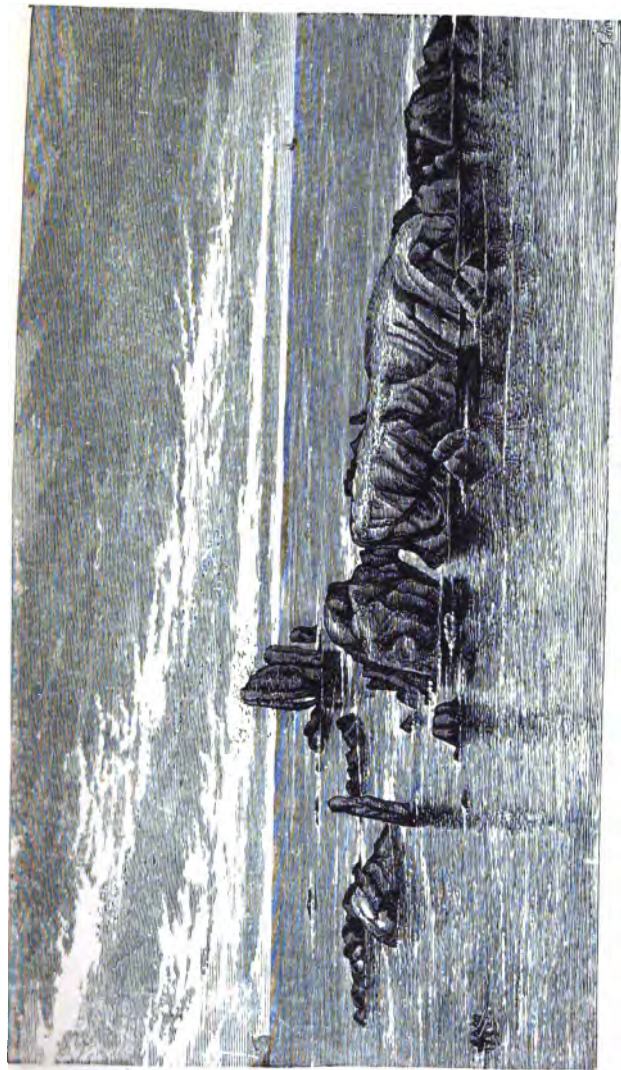
JENNY'S HOOK.

A GREAT joy—I think I might say the *greatest* joy which can come to any home, be it the abode of wealth or poverty, happiness or misery—had come one May morn to the cottage of a young Shetland couple. The first-born had alighted, like a summer bird among new budding branches in the little home of Maunce Hughson and his bonnie Merran; and you may be sure that they rejoiced over the “small woman” as heartily as any other young parents do over similar celestial gifts, and believed as blindly too, that there never had been and never would be such a wonderful baby as theirs.

It was a fine day for the fishing, that on which this baby arrived, but Maunce had gladly availed himself of a brother's kind offer to supply his place in the haaf-boat and had remained on shore to watch over his sick wife and new treasure whilst miles away from land his boat confided in the smiles of a glittering, silent, solemn sea.

Ah! how treacherous are the demons who wake the wild waves to murder.

The boat in which Maunce should have been, never came back to Boadin, and his brother's home was desolate.



THE DRONGS—HILLSWICK.

Maunce tried to hope for days that such a calamity had not befallen them and carefully concealed the matter from Merran, though he found it impossible to allay the fears of Eric's wife. The storm had been swift and short, but all the boats had fled home from its fury and not even the sanguine Maunce could venture to suggest that his comrades would have willingly remained at sea during the squall.

One day—two days—three days—passed, and no one hoped any longer when they saw the minister's pony stop at the doors of those who had so lately been among the living on land. Quietly and sorrowfully the servant of God traversed from one to the other of the six fisher homes, extinguishing the last ray of earthly hope with the same words which wakened the first beam of Heavenly comfort.

Eric's wife was a weak delicate creature who could ill bear the weight of such a blow, but even in the moments of her deepest sorrow she said no word that could add to the regrets of Maunce, to whom his brother's fate brought almost a feeling of self-reproach for the share which he had innocently had in it, and in his inmost heart Maunce Hughson registered a vow to watch over Jenny and her children as tenderly as if they had been his own.

Poor things! They doubly needed a strong man's guardianship for, as I said, the mother was sickly and helpless. Robbie was a wilful boy of twelve, always getting into scrapes, and seldom corrected for the gravest of faults, and Eric had

been a cripple from the time of his birth. *He* had never known the pleasant joys of childhood and having always sat in a tiny chair either looking into the fire, or conversing with grown-up people, had acquired a certain wise expression which fitted strangely with the small face and ten years of the poor boy.

When Maunce broke the tidings of Eric's fate to Merran, they looked at their little daughter and pondered over the "ways of Providence" which had preserved the baby's father in so mysterious a manner, and they instantly resolved upon sharing their home and all they had with Eric's widow.

"He would have done as much for me," Maunce said, and that was enough for Merran though she glanced around the tidy quiet room and thought of the happy hours spent alone with her husband, and felt that in taking such troublesome inmates to share their home she must give up much that had made the course of her life so very bright; yet all was cheerfully and self-denyingly done, and so autumn found the fisherman's family under his brother's roof-tree.

I have often marvelled at the amount of kindness which the poor will do for the poor, and among the Shetlanders this virtue is peculiarly prominent. A neighbour's fare and dinner, however small or mean, will always be shared with those in deeper distress, and though there may be quarrels or bad feeling in many ways, he who gave the hardest word will be the first to help in time of need.

Everybody knew that Maunce Hughson could ill afford to support a double household. Everybody knew what a helpless three the widow and orphans were, and many an act of unobtrusive kindness was shown to them. The remaining boat of the hamlet marked a hook upon the fishing lines for the widow, and, strange to say, that hook never came up from the depths of the sea without being laden with fish. At least it was never hauled into the boat without abundant spoil, and as some fishermen are very expert in their mode of handling the lines, we may give the credit of this fact to their kindly hearts as often as to the suicidal generosity of a cod or a ling!

When that season's harvest was gathered and things made snug for the winter, there was much cause for thanksgiving throughout the islands, for the fishing had been good, the crops abundant, the losses few.

Maunce and his double household shared in the general comfort and their joy if chastened was sincere and heartfelt. Baby Marabel grew and laughed and cheered them all, and her fat fingers and smiling face did much to brighten the sober family. Especially was the little one a source of joy to her mother, upon whom the care and worry of their daily life pressed heaviest.

After a good many persuasions Robbie had been induced to attend the parish school, and the books which he occasionally brought home were a great delight to Eric, who read and re-read them, and copied

bits, and even tried to compose sundry morsels, which you may suppose were often vague and quaint enough, but they served to while away the lagging hours and cause the cripple to forget much that was sad in his lot. No one knew how often the poor child fretted over his helpless condition, and longed that his arms and legs had been as sturdy as those of his brother. Ah! how differently would he have behaved when he marked Robbie's thoughtless foolish ways. How he would have cared for the weak lonely mother, how he would have helped Aunt Merran, and gone to the fishing with Maunce, and tended the ponies and cows and stood in his lost father's place. It was truly hard to have such ennobling thoughts and yet be chained to the fire-side. But all that Eric could do he *did*, and that was to knit socks and such like, for the whole household, to rock little Marabel to sleep, to coax her to her porridge, to speak a cheerful word when it was wanted, and exhibit a constant patience which carried more encouragement than many words. Eric had a very large heart in his puny person and became devotedly attached to his kind aunt, who seemed to understand and appreciate his character better than any one else. It was in her ear that he poured the oft-recurring details of his one great trouble, and from her that he received the consolation he so often needed. Eric's *one* vexation was on Robbie's account, and indeed he was a cause of anxiety to all his friends as well as to his brother. Robbie was, to tell the truth, a very


handsome clever boy, and had been sadly spoiled by his admiring mother, who was now reaping the reward of her foolish indulgence. He would "stick to nothing," as the saying is, and when Maunce remonstrated with him he was always ready to resent his uncle's advice as interference. You would have thought that his father's death would have made Robbie more thoughtful and more careful not to vex his friends, but some boys will take things the wrong way, nothing but the bitterest personal suffering teaching them to think less of themselves and more of others. I do not mean to say that Robbie was not grieved at the loss which they had sustained, for he had loved his kind, hard-working father very dearly ; but there is a sort of reckless way about boys of his impulsive nature which looks uncommonly like indifference, and is selfishness, and they need to pass through a fiery furnace to be cleansed from what grows into confirmed sin.

The winter had almost spent itself and folks were beginning to look out their keskies and spades and to talk of "delling the aites," which in English means preparing the ground for the oat seed. It was sorely against his will that Robbie was coaxed into joining his uncle and aunt in their laborious task. Jenny was quite unfit for work, but Eric had made himself useful at that time in watching the house and tending the baby, who had learned the trick of crawling away beyond his reach and then laughing and crowing over the triumphant feat.

Merran often said she did not know how they could have managed without Eric, and it would have done your heart good to have seen the wan, wearyful face light up at her words of praise. Robbie grumbled and fretted, and never bestowed a thought on the generous man who was so bravely supporting two invalids and a ne'er-do-weel like himself, and Eric's tearful expostulations were only met by his brother with hard taunts or rebukes.

As the spring advanced Robbie was seldom in the fields, but oftener seen clambering among the cliffs in search of the eggs of wild fowl which were flocking back to their summer haunts; and many an anxious hour was spent in the cottage at Boadin when he was out on such excursions. There was something wonderfully attractive to his bold and reckless nature in the dangerous calling of a fowler, and in spite of all friendly forebodings he continued to follow the adventurous avocation which had such fascinations for him. He always scorned the help of rope or stick, and all alone he would sally forth at dawn (which in those latitudes comes almost as soon as the day dies), seldom returning before dusk, when some rare prize in his basket would prove that he had but boasted the truth in saying that he had stood on rocks where never human foot had dared to venture before.

Thus day by day went past bringing the young fowler always back in safety, until even his mother began to forget her fears on his account, and to



enter into his schemes of making money by the valuable assortment of sea-bird's eggs which he had accumulated.

But a day came—a bright, bonnie day—when Robbie vaunted that before evening he should have climbed to the peregrine falcon's towering crag, and have robbed the proud solitary of its eggs or young. The bright bonnie day came, and waned. The sunshine lingered late on the cliff-brows, then followed its author to his rest beyond the sea. The evening came, but Robbie did not return home. No, nor all that night, nor all next day, and although diligent search was made, both among the rocks, and in the sea surrounding them, nothing could be found to tell the fate of the rash lad. It was not until a whole fortnight had passed and every hope of seeing him again had been extinguished, that there came a letter to Maunce, addressed in a big unformed handwriting, which seemed strangely familiar, and which proved to be that of the truant boy. He told his own story thus.

"On board the 'Mermaid,' Liverpool."

"Dear Uncle,—I have shipped here for a year's voyage out to Australia with a mixed cargo, and I suppose you thought I broke my neck at Voder-skerry, but I could not stay longer in Shetland, for it is all hard work and no pay there; and I hope to send mother some money, and I hope Eric will be as kind to her as I was not, for I never could get on well at home. And, dear Uncle, I suppose

you got a fright, but I knew none of you would let me go to sea so young, so I got off in the coal schooner, from Scalloway at night, and worked my way here ; and I know you all think me lazy and selfish, so you will not miss me ; and I will send mother money, and I send my love to you all, and I hope you will make Marabel know about me, for I was good to *her*, and I will send her a new frock for the one I made into boat sails, and she doesn't know anything bad of me, and I am, dear Uncle, your dutiful nephew.

R. HUGHSON."

For once in his life Maunce Hughson was in a thorough passion. To think of all their anxiety and grief on Robbie's account going for naught. To think of such a heartless trick having been played upon them after all their loving forbearance. It was too bad, and no words seemed bad enough for the truant, until Eric said tearfully, if books or sailors tell truth poor Robbie will have as hard a life as here and get sorely punished for his unkindness. Then the others took up the strain in the same forgiving spirit, and ample excuses were found for the foolish, handsome boy, who somehow had appropriated a large share of the home affections.

At length even Maunce said that perhaps it was the best thing for Robbie after all, and he might make a fortune in the Gold land, and be a blessing and comfort to them all yet, and so with hope for their guide, the little household bravely met this

new trial, extracting its sweets, and wisely leaving the bitternesses to their own devices.


Shortly after this time the Baby's birthday came round bringing all the mixed feelings back again. But time did not pause over that day, more than over others. Very lovingly he lifted it from the lives on which it had brought so many changes, and the year went on its way without any remarkable incidents to mark its progress. Towards the end of the summer there came a few weeks of very mild weather, and reports of such an abundance of fish to be caught, that the boats were out early and late, seldom leaving the haaf except to land unprecedented cargoes. The small craft which carried Jenny's Hook was particularly successful in securing spoil, and the crew being all young spirited fellows, the boat was not often seen lagging near land. Away, so far away indeed, that the mother-isles were almost lost to sight, would the dainty shallow fly on her venturesome way and all through the long sunny day, and the mystic "dim" of the Shetland night, would she quietly lie alone among the great waves of the wide watery wold, patiently drawing up from its billowy home the offspring of the deep. On one especially fair mid-summer's eve, this especially fair little boat was plying her usual avocation at the far haaf. Her sail was hauled down; four of her crew were coiled up asleep, for the lines had not long been laid in the sea, and some hours must elapse before they required looking to again. One of the two men who

watched had his eyes lazily fixed upon a fine schooner which was lying about two miles to seaward, quite becalmed, and, as she rolled from wave to wave, giving the idea of being wonderfully content under the detention.

"I wonder now," the young man remarked at last, "where yon ship has come from, and whither bound. She makes me think of comfort and security that *we* don't know much about in things like this," glancing contemptuously at his frail, open scrap of "wooden wall."

"If you take to '*wondering*' every sail that you sight out here you'll not leave much time for better employment," gruffly replied his companion, whose words so effectually put a stop to conversation that Gawn was fain to continue his solitary musings. They were not of a pleasant nature and ill accorded with the holy peace and beauty of the place and hour, for he was a very discontented fellow, and having only commenced the haaf-fishing that season, had not yet been able to tone down his restless ambition to the humble lot before him.

The rumour of fortunes being made in an hour at the Diggings had spread like a fever throughout Shetland, causing a great majority of the lads to forsake their work and their home for a dream which could not be otherwise than a disappointment to the many. But such dreams are always relied upon until bitter reality brings the awakening, and Gawn was a believing dreamer; so through the silent hours he followed the bent of many wild



imaginings until early morning brought a smart breeze which threatened so decidedly of a coming storm that the fishers were aroused to the necessity of hauling their line sooner than was at first intended.

While some of the men rowed the boat along, it, somehow, became Gawn's duty to lift the short cords from which depended the hooks, while his companion of the watch drew in the main line. One by one the hooks with their valuable booty were brought up and the fish safely captured, while the boat steadily pursued her way towards the buoy which marked the extremity of the line. They were nearing the end of their task when Gawn leaning over the gunwale felt an uncommonly heavy weight on the hook which was nearing the surface of the water, and, uttering an exclamation of surprise, he drew into the boat a small wooden casket, attached to the Widow's Hook by means of a padlock which fastened the box.

Notwithstanding the lowering signs around which bade them make haste, the crew paused in their work to contemplate and wonder over the novel catch which was passed from hand to hand and rightly conjectured to be a rich prize for Jenny as it certainly contained some heavy compact matter musically jingling to the tune of gold, or silver, or jewels, or all three.

But the screaming sea-fowl, the blackening sky, the moaning surf, the boats hurrying past on their homeward flight, were warnings which must not

pass unheeded when men's lives are in their hands, so the precious box was consigned to Gawn's keeping again, the remaining line cut adrift, the sail hoisted and the boat turned for land—the last of a frightened, flying sisterhood. Ay, frightened and flying, but outsped by the tempest which wakes so suddenly from a summer slumber and deals death to the unwary.

The sea had so short a time before been so still and blue, and now there was only white leaping surf before and behind and all around. It came curling up to the gunwale as the boat sped on, now on this side, now on that, and at the moment when her cautious skipper was steering her bow clear of one angry crest another would rush bounding up behind, drenching him where he sat. There had been no time to reef the sail, or lighten the frail vessel of her cargo, but she battled bravely with the storm for a time. *Then* there came a sudden moment when it seemed as if the sea broke over her on all sides at the same time, and there was a hurried forsaking of their several duties on the parts of all six men—a confused clutching at anything or anyone nearest—a mingled horrible cry, and with her white sail fully expanded the boat made a head-long plunge into the boiling sea, and vanished from the light of day as suddenly as if she had been a bubble on the crest of a rampant wave.

* * * * *

Can you fancy that three years have come and



gone since the Boadin boat with her stalwart crew, her trim sail, her fishing gear, her widow's hook, and her unopened casket disappeared from sight? Can you fancy that things have jogged on for thirty-six months, and look at the end of that time just as if no such accident had ever been? Can you fancy that Baby Marabel has grown to be quite a wise little woman of four, rocking baby-number 3's cradle, and that Jenny is a very helpless, nervous invalid always confined to bed? Can you fancy that Eric's chair in the chimney corner has a table before it covered with writing materials, and above it a small book shelf whence he reads of food and clothing and comfort which he seldom sees; and that he still sits in the same spot with the same serious smile always in his eyes, and the sunshine of his meek and quiet spirit diffusing itself upon all the household? Can you fancy Maunce still toiling, but harder, for the maintenance of his family, and Merran growing carewornly pale over patched garments and scanty porridge? Can you fancy that in all those years there has just once come a letter from Robbie! and no mention of the much needed money which he *was* to send to his mother. His first voyage had long since been done, but he had never returned to friends and home; and his sorrowing relatives had resigned themselves to the belief that although he had not been lost at sea, he had become as entirely dead to them as if the ocean had claimed him for its prey. They were not far wrong. A

sailor's rough life is not calculated to keep the tender feelings of the heart intact. Knocking about from place to place, and enduring much at the hands of a tyrant master, had hardened Robbie sadly, and made him very forgetful of his duty, and thus the three years had become a part of the past to him and he had almost forgotten Shetland in that time.

Drifting about the world in an aimless way and saving nothing, it chanced that Robbie became fearfully ill from exposure during a protracted gale, and having no loving skilful hands to tend his sick-bed the lad relapsed so often that his captain resolved upon sending him ashore as soon as they reached a port. Weak, helpless, and almost dying, Robbie found himself in a sailor's hospital at Melbourne, among strangers and in a very strange land.

Ah! *then* the deadened memories awoke, and the yearning thoughts of home and kindred came thronging up to sting the reviving conscience. There was no hushing *that* voice when once it had gained for itself a hearing, and I hope there are few lads who have so many hard truths to be told them by their inward monitor as Robbie had. Day after day, as he lay in bed, something new would come back upon his remembrance to add to the number of sins arraying themselves against him, but there came no *friend* to whom he could unfold his troubles, and the burden became daily more unbearable.

One morning there was brought into the ward where Robbie lay, prostrate as much from mental as from physical pain, a sailor whose dark discontented face had yet something so familiarly attractive in it as to awaken a strong interest in Robbie's mind and induce him to address a few words to the stranger. At first his advances were met by a surly repulse, but after a time Robbie observed that the man suddenly became as eager for conversation as he was himself. A little talk on indifferent themes soon led to the one object engrossing the mind of the repentant wanderer, and, joyful that he had at last obtained a seemingly interested listener, Robbie poured the tale of his wayward youth into the ear of this new friend, who received his confession with every mark of deep sympathy and attention.

When the story was ended the man replied in broken tones, "I am no priest to give you spiritual consolation, but some parts of your life have been so like my own that this much I can say, rejoice, that you are laid here so early and that repentance has come before you are a man. If it had been so with me I should not have had such a desperate bad life to answer for, and I'm not so very old either; but you must not speak any more of those things to me. It'll soon be all up with me, but before—yes, sometime—I'll confess to you in turn."

Robbie was mending a bit at this time, and although he obeyed the injunction not to "talk of those

things," he tried in various ways to care for the poor man who was so evidently hurrying towards Eternity. The impulse to be of some use and the indirect comfort which he received and imparted, greatly assisted Robbie's recovery. When he was almost strong enough to leave the Hospital, Robbie thought it well to hint to his sick friend that he must go away soon and to offer any help in his power. The sailor was greatly agitated, and, to Robbie's intense surprise, begged him to remain till death should occur. "It shall be well worth your while; I have plenty of money, you shall have amply enough to take you home; only wait and do me a last service. I have not courage to speak, but I want you to hear the best and the worst of me." Robbie could not refuse such an appeal, and although he longed, like the prodigal of old, to make amends for the past by dutifully returning to kindred and fatherland, he waited by the stranger's death-bed until the solemn call came, and the lonely sailor, closing his eyes on this world, began, we will hope, a better and a brighter life in the great Hereafter.

He had not "confessed" to Robbie after all, but, by the advice of a clergyman, had written all that he would have said, and this paper he had given to Robbie with injunctions to open it, as soon after his death as possible.

Will you wonder as much as Robbie did when he discovered by this same document that the solitary stranger was none other than Gawn, the

fisherman who was supposed to have perished with his five comrades years before?

An hour after the accident, the schooner, which Gawn had watched and wondered at, came scudding under closely reefed canvas, past the spot where the boat had gone down, and spying something which looked like a man clinging to the keel of a boat, she lay to, and lowering a boat of her own, picked up the drowning fisher, at great hazard to her own crew.

The schooner was bound for a far distant port, and Gawn had no desire to return to Boadin, for in the breast of his coat, he held the casket which had been drawn into the boat on the widow's hook. Having ascertained that it contained many hundred pounds' worth of gold and precious stones, Gawn stifled the voice of conscience, and determined on appropriating to his own use what belonged to Jenny.

Although so dishonestly obtained, the money and valuables thrived in his hands, for he was a careful man, and he shortly amassed by its means a small fortune. But Gawn was not made happier by being richer. His dreams were haunted by a pale woman's face—a woman whom he had robbed, and it was vain to argue with himself, that she had no knowledge of the casket; that if he had not held it in his coat, it must have been swept away with the boat, and her more precious cargo of human lives; that his preservation was unknown to all; that neither he nor his companions would have

dreamt of giving Jenny such chance spoil as *that*; that he would pay it all back some day. No! such sophistry would not do, and so, to drown the voice of his better angel, Gawn did, as many another fool has done before, plunged deep into the sea of sin, to get rid of the one great crime which had met him on the surface. But when disease had claimed him for its victim, the all-guiding hand of Providence had pointed out a way of restitution by bringing about the meeting with Robbie; and, with Death before him, Gawn did all he could toward making amends. He confessed his sin, and bequeathed his entire fortune to Jenny and her children. So it was not with empty hands after all that Robbie set out for home.

On arriving in Britain he wrote to prepare them all for his return, but he left the tale of Gawn to the time of meeting.

You may be sure that his letter was very, very welcome. You may be sure that the days were very pleasant ones which preceded the coming back of the wandering sheep. You may be sure that Merran's motherly heart had as fond a welcome as Jenny's had for the prodigal. You may be sure that Eric's thoughtful eyes glowed and glistened as he gazed admiringly on the manly sailor boy. You may be sure that Maunce had forgotten all the scoldings with which he should have greeted Robbie. You may be sure that there were many exclamations of surprise over the recital of Gawn's confession, which they all agreed had better be kept a secret, since the poor erring

man had left no relations to reap any advantage, or disadvantage, from the knowledge of his behaviour. Maunce said, "Let it all be buried in Gawn's distant unnamed grave." So everybody in the island supposed that Robbie had made a fortune in Australia, and that Gawn had been drowned in sight of home.

You may suppose that many hitherto unknown comforts found their way into the cottage at Boadin, and that Jenny revived wonderfully from the debilitated condition which care and poverty had so much assisted. You may suppose that Merran and the children had nice, bright, new dresses; and that Maunce worked less, and had often (*very* often, I meant to say) a pair of strong, willing young arms to assist him. You may suppose that Eric's bookshelf multiplied itself into a goodly library, and his wooden-chair became a padded invalid's lounge in which he could wheel himself about at will, while in process of time a certain book of small dimensions claimed him for its author, and Eric's happiness reached a climax. You may suppose that Robbie did not often leave Shetland after his first return, but became a dutiful, loving-hearted man, content to be what his father had been, a patient, cheerful, industrious fisher.

But you need not suppose unless you like, because I did not say that it was so in reality, that in his steady noble manhood Robbie married a young sweet bride whose name was Marabel, and whose lovely face had been for seventeen years the beauty-spot of Boadin.

LITTLE LONDONERS IN SHETLAND.

I.—A RIDE NORTHWARDS.

WELCOME, welcome, little Londoners. A hearty Norse welcome to the old rock! Your cheeks are City-pale, and your dress is far too neat, for lively, energetic, animal-spirited children. But our Northern breezes shall brighten the former, while endless excursions by land and sea shall rumple the smooth clothes and dim the high polish on your boots. It was a long voyage and venture-some for you to take, but I am sure you will come to like our islands, and when I have kept you with me for a time you will return to your great City, and perhaps will have as many interesting stories to tell as Mamma and Papa who have had to go so far southwards in search of health. What a great boy you have grown, Tom! and Siskin is not much behind you. Fourteen did you say you were? How time flies! I can remember you a little fellow in short frocks, but now you are almost as tall as Cousin Cynthia, and quite strong and manly enough to be her escort in many a coming excursion. And Siskin, you are only two years younger than Tom, so you will not be afraid to mount our "rough and ready" shelties, and

accompany us on our pilgrimages. You know I am well acquainted with every bit of earth around us, and I also know a number of odd stories about the islands; so while we ride and row, walk and talk, I shall "post you up" in Shetland and the Shetlanders.

Although winter is scarcely the season for hunting after scenery and the picturesque, I do not see why my young visitors should not make the most of their time and get acquainted with some things.

It is a stormy day, and if you will make use of the ponies, I will take you to the north part of the island, and show you the wild, ungovernable waves chafing about the rocks and spending all their strength upon the iron sides of their opponents.

Is not this a beautiful valley to which we have come? It is very sweet and fertile in summer, but just now it looks intensely weird and lonely; the hills abruptly rise on either side, but the valley winds a long way inland. We have to ride along the hill a bit, and then follow a narrow path which leads us down into the hamlet whose straggling cottages "drag their weary length" to the very water's edge. Let us pause a moment and take in the scene. Norwick Bay is a beautiful crescent, as you see—two jutting points of crag and a long line of sand. The great unbroken waves of the northern ocean roll on to the sand and spend themselves among the pebbles. You can gaze straight out, and nothing will come between you and the horizon save endless depths of water. Give your

ponies the rein and let us scamper over the wet sand, for *they* do not fear the roar of the mighty monarch, and we want to see if he is boiling Saxie's Kettle properly. We shall have to be very careful as we ride along Lambaness. It is a small strip of land that runs far out into the sea, narrowing as it goes and forming the northern arm of Norwick's Crescent. Saxie's Kettle is at the extreme point, and it is a basin in the rock into which the water rises *from below*, bubbling and hissing much as if it were on the eve of boiling over. Saxie was a wonderful Norse giant of olden times who lived among the lone wilds of Skaw and Saxaford, and who (of course) used to carry off naughty children, and even grown people, for his dinner. He must have been a very odd specimen of the genus Giant; for, although he liked baby flesh, he was fonder still of drowned fisherman. This "Kettle" served him as a bath, a parlour, a cooking apparatus, and a food reservoir. He would dive to 'its wonderful depths, and, fishing up the body of some poor sailor which had been washed into that hideous sepulchre by the merciless sea, would cause the water to become heated; and when his meal was cooked to his taste, would bid his great ally to cut off the water supply and as soon as the "Kettle" was empty, would comfortably ensconce himself within its capacious sides and there gorge himself. We will have something more to tell about Saxie by-and-by; but I think we cannot afford to get ourselves wet through,

and the spray has made good use of its time upon our hats and riding jackets. Come down to the sand once more, for I want to show you where a "skeleton in armour" was found. Just above the reach of the tide—just below the surface coat of sand, there they found the poor remnant of a former age, and a once busy life. Surely one of you can recite Longfellow's poem here; it is a household word even in Shetland; but musical English lips will give me a sweet version of the immortal lay. I wish Longfellow had known about *this* skeleton, and he might perhaps have changed the scene of his story.

There are also remains of a Norse hold near the sand. Scotch folk call these strange places, Pictish Burghs, but the Picts never had anything to do with *us*. It was our Danish and Norwegian ancestors who built those kerns as receptacles for the plunder which they brought from southern lands. At least that is our unlearned version of the matter. Now you must be very careful as you retrace your way across the sand, for at one part there is a treacherous quicksand, where we would speedily be even *less* lucky than the lover in the "Bride of Lammermuir," who had a loose plume in his hat that told the story of his end.

I remember once a party of us were visiting this place, and having great fun about a certain pony whose saddle, and consequently rider, was held on by no stronger girth than a bit of tape! We laughed, and almost hoped to see a tumble, but

we were glad that our stock of saddle girths had fallen so short as to allow of such a substitute, when we saw the pony floundering in the quicksand, and man, and pony, and saddle only saved by the bursting of the tape and the dislodgement of the rider. A vigorous bound brought the Sheltie back to firm earth, and outstretched hands drew our friend from the quagmire which was slowly sucking him downwards.



STONE CROSS, NORWICK.

Had we visited Norwick in the summer time you would have seen many wild-flowers growing everywhere. Scarlet poppies lifting their saucy heads among the corn, and graceful ferns too, beautifying every spot that lacked loveliness of its own. You might even have gone to the old churchyard, and read some of the quaint inscrip-

tions, and have wondered who and what they were who slept below. But on this chilly winter day we cannot think of that, and the cold grassless earth leaves the outlines of the graves so distinct and bare that you can almost fancy the dead are lying chill and undraped before you.

Let us turn now on the side of the hill, and take a long look at the silent valley with its pure white brow of sand, its haggard locks of heather upon the mountain, and its strong arms of iron rock.

It is not very late in the afternoon, so we will take the road to Balta Sound over the hills, instead of along the sea-shore through Harolds-wick, and by doing so we shall have time to turn a little aside and visit the famous "fairy rings." Nay, we will not ride into the magic circle. What, though the half-tamed animals that range the hills make a resting-place of the spot where Sea-kings once met in solemn conclave and dispensed justice.

That is nothing to us, and you may smile, you practical young Cockneys, but Cyntha's pony shall not set an example of irreverence for the glorious past. We will fasten our steeds to some neighbouring stones, and then—

"On Heaven and our Lady call;
And enter the enchanted hall,"—

a hall canopied by the sky, curtained by the clouds, walled by a lowly mound of earth, and bearing no trace of the lords who once ruled there, save what is told in story.

You see that heap of stones in the very centre.

That is supposed to be the remains of what was once the seat where the higher magnates sat ; and legends also tell that human bones were found beneath those stones corroborating *other* legends, which say that the victims of justice were sacrificed to the gods and buried there. A London friend once took me to visit the Napoleon relics, and I sat in the carriage which carried the poor vanquished hero from Waterloo. *Now* I return London the compliment, and bid *you* to sit down on those scattered stones where vikings once reclined ! You see a mound of earth encircles the altar, leaving one narrow entrance facing the east ; beyond that again is another circle, and then another. Can you not fancy you see the grand array of warrior kings coming across the hills to the rendezvous, and filing into the different "rings," as their grades allow ? It is a strange fact that those concentric circles are always found on a site commanding a view of the ocean from all sides. East, west, north, and south, the eye rests upon the island girdle, and no hostile sail could come without being descried.

In the present age this time-hallowed spot is occupied by none more formidable than fairies, and hence the modern name ! I do not bid you believe it, but I have been told that if a person goes within those circles between twelve and one o'clock at night, they will see very strange things, and, worse than that, they will not be able to get outside the magic ring until the dawn comes ; try what they

can, walk as they will, *there* they must remain. As a proof of this I will tell you, while we ride home, of a fair young girl who went out in the twilight to meet her lover on the hill. She lost her way, and eleven o'clock found her stepping accidentally within the fairy-haunted circle. In vain she tried to retrace her way. Invisible chains held her fast, and wearily she wandered all the night, but could not overstep the fatal boundary. In the early morning she returned home sad and bewildered ; but would give no explanation of what had frightened her. She became very ill, and soon afterwards died a raving lunatic. An old witchy wife said that the girl had told her (?) where she had been, and what she had seen, and *that* was how folk came to know. It was whispered afterwards that the real state of the case was this : the poor girl had accidentally overheard her faithless sweetheart making love to another, and even arranging for a speedy marriage. But who would believe such a statement as *that*? and who would ever suppose that a maiden could die of a broken heart?

Now let us give our ponies the reins, for they do not need the whip. See how merrily they jog along while a hurrying north wind sweeps past us, and his brother breezes follow, moaning as we trot homewards.

II.—ABOUT BALTASOUND.

IN what direction shall we go to-day? The snow has melted away, and the clear frosty air is so bracing that I quite long for a ramble. We cannot use the ponies this morning, but I can show you much that is interesting within walking distance. Suppose we go and visit the Chromate of Iron mines. They are unused now, but a year ago there were engines and men busily at work excavating the valuable ore, which is found nowhere in Britain save in this locality. We will only stay to take a peep at the mines, and then climb to the top of that high hill, where I promise to tell you a story.

You see it is quite easy climbing the south and east sides of the Muckle Heogoe, but it rises too abruptly north and west for Siskin and me to scale. A learned society in your wonderful London sent down some gentlemen lately, who dug up and dug down, upon and about, the Muckle Heogoe, and fairly demolished all our cherished legends of the place—demolished them, at least, as far as they themselves were concerned. You know I am an ignorant, superstitious person, and I implicitly believe everything that has its foundation in days and deeds of old.

Here, then, on the top of this hill, was the burying ground of the ancients (so my darling legends say), and here, too, they executed criminals,

burning their remains and scattering the ashes to the winds of heaven. I think I see some dark priest of Odin standing with malignant smile over the mutilated body of some victim, lighting the pyre, and when at last nothing remains save a handful of dust, lifting high that insignificant remnant of mortality, and with wild incantations flinging the senseless ashes to the blast. I think I see, ere the savage deed is done, a funeral train come slowly up the hill. Wails of sorrow and dismal music precede the bier, whereon lies the honoured form of some island chief. With heathen ceremonial the body of the hero is placed in a sitting posture within his tomb, his weapons are placed by his right hand, and food is laid at his left, for the warrior must have provisions to succour him on the way to Valhalla, and he must be suitably accoutred when he arrives there. There—my dream is over.

Now, look down on the bay directly north of us. It is almost at our feet. It is called Haroldswick, and you must know that it was here that a famous Norseman landed, with an armed retinue to make a conquest of the island. Just at the foot of this hill, and just beyond the rude beach, the battle was fought. A noble fight folk say it was, and the Norwegian invaders bought their victory dearly, for they left their bold chief, the warlike Harold, buried below yon cairn of stones that you see there in the field.

Although the houses come close to the water's edge, and there are no high cliffs around Haroldswick,

it is an ugly place for a ship to come near in winter. Like its near neighbour, Norwick, it lies open and unsheltered, and the two great dark promontories which form its gaunt arms are dreadfully suggestive of shipwreck and hopeless doom. Many years ago a vessel, attempting to enter the calm haven within Balta, struck upon that rock which lifts its brow so sullenly from the water and guards the entrance to the harbour with such uncompromising sternness. Disabled and unresisting, the barque drifted up to the face of the lofty precipice. Ah! how remorselessly did the exulting surges lift the vessel in their strong hands, and fling her upon the bosom of the cliff; and how proudly and coldly did that hardened heart receive the ocean's toy, piercing it with a thousand darts and crushing it in a thousand atoms! But one solitary sailor survived to tell the story, and how *he* managed to save his life is a miracle.

Clibberswick and the Keen are so much alike, that I always think of them as two great silent vindictive brothers, who have sustained some terrible injury, and have vowed a fearful revenge. They seem to stand facing each other, frowning on the ocean, and commanding the waves to say that should a hapless victim escape the *one* it shall assuredly fall into the toils of the other.

Only two years ago a small schooner, mistaking the one promontory for his more southern brother, entered Haroldswick, and stranded among those low crags which you see along the shore. It was a very stormy night, and almost *a case* with the crew.

They did, however, manage to reach the land, where they were heartily welcomed and hospitably entertained. The crew were Norwegian and Danish, and I must not forget to tell you, that when all had landed, it was discovered that a dog had been left in the ship. At the risk of his life, the good captain swam back to the wreck for his four-footed friend, and I am glad to say, both returned in safety.

I wish you particularly to observe the island of Balta from here, for I think it is the prettiest view we shall ever get of it. You see it is a long narrow islet, with very high cliffs all along the east side, and the land gradually slopes towards the west. Our dear old harbour would be no harbour at all if it were not for that friendly island which stretches across the mouth of the *Voe*, like a mighty break-water, and thus wards off the sea which chafes around the immoveable cliffs. Do you observe how narrow are the entrances to the harbour? I assure you it is no joke navigating a vessel into Baltasound. The south sound is pretty easy, but the north one is so studded with sunken and half-sunken rocks, that it is a perilous job to pass through even in fine weather.

Some day, when the sweet summer comes, we will pay a visit to Balta, but as we always go there in pic-nic parties, I shall not be able to tell you anything about it then, so will now, while we make our descent to our home in the valley.

Did you observe a rock near the north end of

the island, which seemed to stand detached from the land? There is one very narrow rock-way, which joins that crag to its parent isle, and it would delight your venturesome hearts to tread the dangerous way, and visit the old cairn which crowns the brow of the cliff. In some long gone-by days, that ruin has been a stronghold of our fathers. A dream of the olden time comes over me again, and I see the bold marauders secreting their spoils in this impregnable hold. I see them bring here their "household gods," their women and children, their gold and jewels, and successfully defend their treasures against wandering robbers, like themselves. From the sublime to the ridiculous. Balta is at present the abode of a few sheep and innumerable rabbits, and is entirely the property of the gentleman whose house stands on that bonnie green ness, with the jaw-bone of a gigantic whale making an arch over his entrance gate. Some thirty years ago, a probably love-sick leviathan made the very great mistake of coming into Baltasound, and being of uncommonly large dimensions got stranded in a harbour which could float the "Great Eastern." His love and woe were speedily put to an end, and, after a lady had performed the feat of climbing on to his back, as he lay like an island in the Voe, his *blubber* was put to its proper use (?), and his jaw-bones were elevated as you see.

Baltasound is a fine place for old legends, if it is rather poor in the matter of antique remains. To

be sure there is a dilapidated mill, said to be haunted ; and the house where an old man lived who had seen and conversed with fairies ; and there are two or three witches, and a trow-stone ;



TREES IN SHETLAND GARDEN.

but these are all modern things, and of comparatively little interest in consequence ! Baltasound boasts of containing the most northern garden and shrubbery in Her Majesty's dominions. The trees

are little more than bushes as yet, but they have had to struggle with many things, and now that they have become acclimatized, they promise to do fairly. You must not suppose that our islands have always been so bare and unwooded as they now appear. In those past ages, of which I told you, there were trees (if not particularly lofty) in large numbers throughout the country, and it is much to be regretted that improvident people and peat-moss have despoiled Shetland of the one thing wanting to make its beauty perfect. Ah! here we are at home again.

III.—OFFSPRING OF OCEAN.

WHY, Siskin, what do you think? Whales in the harbour! On with your hat and let us run to the shore, for the boats are already gathering fast and thick upon the water, and there is no telling how soon the shoal may be stranded. Tom is off already in the "Lalla Rookh," and as she is painted white we shall easily distinguish our sportsmen, and be able to tell what part they take in the hunt. There are ten boats already out as far as Balta, which is quite three miles off; and how the men come running along and jumping into the first boats they chance to spy! They have left their several occupations at the first alarm, for who knows how valuable the booty may prove? Now I can see the little skiffs are slowly pulling into

the harbour again, sometimes to one side of the Voe, sometimes to the other, and the nearer they come the more the number increases, for boats are joining the party from every direction, until now they number over a score. Already we can hear the shouts and "din of battle," which prove that the whales are really there and are being driven to their death. You know any noise frightens the poor creatures, and of course they try to get away from it, and are thus *caa'd* (driven) on shore, where the knife ends the unequal struggle.

I wonder why our white canoe keeps so much behind the others. She is far in the rear of the little fleet, but doubtless there is some good reason. Ah! there are the whales! I saw their black bodies tumble along a short distance in advance of their pursuers. Baltasound is splendidly adapted for a whale trap, as it runs so far inland (almost like a river), and is so narrow and shallow; only how the stupid animals have been so silly as to come inside of Balta I cannot imagine! I suppose they have got confused and lost among the skerries and islets, for you know, their home is the free deep ocean, far, far from land or rock, and they have been accustomed to range at will through boundless regions of sea, and therefore do not study or understand navigation!

Now the chase draws nearer—here they come—the whales are not a stone's-throw from the shore, and almost stranded at our feet, and therefore the boats gather close together, and some pull rapidly

forward that they may be first "in at the death." They should not be so hurried. They have broken the line of pursuit, and the poor hunted creatures may yet make a desperate attempt to get off while they are still afloat. And now it has just happened as I feared it would, a harpoon has been stuck into one of the whales—the boats have rushed among the shoal, leaving room in all directions for the pursued to turn. The advantage has been taken, and the game has escaped. Poor things! one could almost rejoice to see how gladly they go plunging seawards again; and *now* I understand why the "Lalla Rookh" kept in the rear. Her crew have foreseen what might ensue from such a disorderly chase, and as soon as the whales broke away the little boat made off too. Once more the "hunt" is renewed, but with small hope of success, for the water-giants are at home in their native element, and can make their way so rapidly through the surges that it is almost impossible for the rowers to keep near them. Let us walk a little way up the sloping shore, to where we can better overlook the harbour. Why! it does not seem such a hopeless pursuit after all, for the silly whales have taken the longest route to Balta, and of course the boats have gone by the "short cut" through the middle of the Voe, and have reached the mouths of the harbour first. Alas! poor whales, experience teaches your foe, and this time your doom is sealed. Cautiously and slowly the zealous boatmen turn their prey once more to the head of the



Voe. Carefully and with perseverance the *caa'ing* is continued until the little herd (probably a family party, for their number is small, and there are a mama and baby among them), is driven ashore and unresistingly butchered. We know it is over with the victims now when we see the reddened jets they blow, and the sympathy, which previously was all with the lords of creation, is now entirely given to the conquered leviathans. But I am sorry that the prize should prove such a trivial one, as it will not repay the poor fishermen for all the trouble they have taken to secure it. It was a very different matter with the last shoal which came here. *That* was a *caa* of "bottle noses;" and I have heard it said that there were upwards of one hundred whales. In consequence of there being no regulations or laws relating to the chase and capture of whales, that valuable booty was nearly lost in the same manner as these few we have just seen killed might have been. The prompt skill of the laird, who was heading the chase, did the work of many hunters. Just when the shoal was making off he aimed his gun (which he always carried wherever he went) at the leading whale. Wounded, terrified, and dying, the helpless animal rushed madly on shore, and the whole herd followed in his wake. To a people like the Shetlanders, dependent for their living on the caprices of Old Ocean, such a gift as a shoal of whales is not to be lightly valued, and of course there are many charming legends and superstitions connected with this matter as well as all others in

Shetland. I could tell you of magic reasons why the whales come here. I could tell you of mystic spells which bring the free-born leviathans within the cruel clutches of man, and I could chain your hearing for hours, with wondrous tales of the deep and its many strange denizens.

I could tell of the sly, slimy sea-serpent, which glides about among the surf, with jet black mane, with crest of white glistening foam, and a wily, vindictive eye, and how its powerful glance can lure the fish from the hooks and daunt the heart of the boldest fisher. I could tell of the hideous, hairy monster, with its many waving arms, lying sleepless at the bottom of the sea, watching and waiting for some hapless boat to pass overhead, when he will swiftly rise to the surface, clasp the frail shallop in his horrid embrace, and draw her slowly, silently, and surely down to his watery couch. I could tell of the sad solitary sea-sprites, who wander about among the rocks and coral cells, wailing unceasingly for the hapless fate which dooms them to a thousand years of mortality and then a never-ending death. I could tell of the beauteous mermaidens who bathe their emerald locks in the briny tears of their Father, who haunt the paths of their metamorphosed lovers (*yclept seals* by men) and wreak vengeance upon the destroyers of the beloved, who are sometimes hurled into the hands of the human by the bright and laughing lip of a handsome fisher lad whose kindness of heart (and superstitious fears)

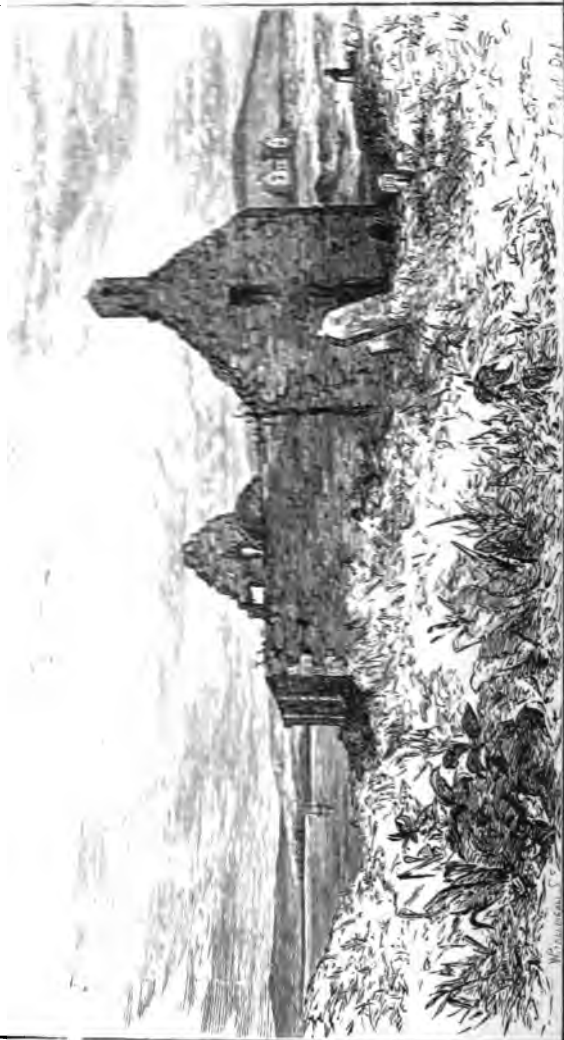
give back to her native sea the tearful, trembling ocean maid. And I could tell of the troubled souls of the drowned, unburied dead, who touch the surges with their air-born wings, and restlessly roam above the changing and unhallowed tombs of their earthly forms, who visit by night the friends who mourned them, and who taste no peace until the dear, unconscious companions of mortality, the lifeless bodies that they love, are laid below the sod or dissolved into the elements. I could tell of a bonnie bark which left this isle, in long years past, for the little metropolis of our Norland isles, with a fair freight of stalwart men, comely women, and merry children, I could tell how the boat reached her port, how she left again for home with her white sail so proudly set and her gunwale kissing the surf, with the weight of a goodly cargo. Ah! I could tell how wistful eyes looked out for many a day, but never saw the bonnie boat come back, for she had passed o'er the rocky lair of an ocean-chained storm-king and his swift servant-surges had overwhelmed her. No mortal knew how she perished, and only a sorrowing mermaid wept over her. The soft hands of that ocean girl bore up the tiny form of a young child (it had been one of those in the boat), and placed it tenderly on a rugged crag which rose above the reach of tide or tempest. There some sailors found it, and pityingly carried the fair little body to the home it would never know. And so that infant soul found rest. Ah! if I had the muse's wand I would

weave you such tales of old Ocean's phantom children as would thrill your hearts and dim your bright eyes, but—one step from the sublime to the ridiculous—here come our whale hunters, wet as “dreggled craws” * and hungry as savage sharks ; so goodbye romance, and haste ye, warm socks and smoking dinner !

* “Dreggled craws.” Crows when drenched, are about the most miserable looking creatures one can imagine.

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11



OLD KIRK—MID YELL.

MINNIE MADGE.

It was a rarely beautiful bit of Norland earth—the little Isle of Leebaskerry. The sea-gull and raven had their wild homes among the cliffs, and the eider-duck reared her downy brood beside the rocky beach. Upon the hill and its adjacent heath, the golden plover and gentle lapwing loved to nestle at nightfall, and often on the sandy shore, or among the lower crags, the seal and otter came up to rest, from the never-ending motion of the sea. One small cluster of houses, lying on the slope of the hill, showed that human beings had also been lured to the lone yet lovely retreat, and an old churchyard in the valley bade me remember it was not *all* Eden. I have ferried the narrow channel and looked upon the fair landscape so often that it is an easy matter for me to talk of it, and make it the scene of a story, but although the picture is very vivid to my mind's eye, I am not at all sure about making it so to yours. Alas! I fear that even if I could you would "skip" the description, and go on to the more interesting part; so, for once I will follow your example, and plunge immediately into the tale.

The cluster of houses that I talked about con-

sisted of a gentleman's dwelling, his farm offices, his factor's cottage, and the comfortable little home his kindness had provided for his nurse. Leebaskerry was held to be haunted, spell-bound, bewitched, fairy-infested, and I-do-not-know-what-all, by the people in the neighbouring islands; and indeed, if good sense had not told you that the peculiarities of its inhabitants arose from the fact of their living in such isolation, you would almost have believed that the strange stories really had a foundation. The laird was a queer, eccentric man, with only one idea in his head, and that one idea was Leebaskerry. He was the sole proprietor of the island, and its history, ancient and modern, its geology, its botany, its ornithology, its rocks and hillocks, moors and mountains, were the subjects which engrossed his every thought.

Seeing that such was the case, you will not wonder that his son and daughter were but ill cared for, and not at all looked after. They had no mother, poor things, except an angel in heaven, who only visited them at night in dreams, and her day-duties were badly executed by Mr Sechman's sister, a decidedly strong-minded old maid.

Yaspar Sechman, the laird's son, was a fine boy of eleven; he had inherited from his southern mother a dark complexion and black eyes, a high spirit, but a sickly constitution. His sister Ghulda had just completed her fourteenth year, and was simply a bright, joyous, healthy, Scandinavian lassie; very imaginative, and strongly imbued with a delicious



odour of superstition. She was very tenderly attached to her young brother, and he could scarcely get along a moment without Ghulda, who was elder sister, mother, nurse, and everything, to the delicate boy. What pleasant rambles these two had over the soft heather and among the cliffs! No anxious mamma or cross governess to remind them of books and dangerous precipices. Sometimes they had leave to use the boat, and then it was a rare delight to float over the placid water, and build castles in the air. Ghulda would row while Yaspas guided the helm, and enthralled his listener with some wild legend of olden times. Or they would sit dipping their fingers in the cool waves and suffering the boat to drift where she would, while they recited the lay of some long-departed scald, or chanted a weird song of fatherland. You can have no idea how happily those children were "brought up," or rather *left to grow*, like Topsy. There is a vein of dark, wild, poetic thought in the Shetland mind which clothes life and its realities in the strange garb of untutored imagination. An accomplished mother had been taken away in their early childhood, and Mr Sechman's studies (so much of them as his children understood) only fostered the superstitious element, which made so large a portion of their characters. Aunt and the factor laughed at stories of trows and spectres, mermaids and witches, but Ghulda drew her own conclusions, when she observed Miss Jean cross herself as she passed the fairy knowe;

forward that they may be first "in at the death." They should not be so hurried. They have broken the line of pursuit, and the poor hunted creatures may yet make a desperate attempt to get off while they are still afloat. And now it has just happened as I feared it would, a harpoon has been stuck into one of the whales—the boats have rushed among the shoal, leaving room in all directions for the pursued to turn. The advantage has been taken, and the game has escaped. Poor things! one could almost rejoice to see how gladly they go plunging seawards again; and *now* I understand why the "Lalla Rookh" kept in the rear. Her crew have foreseen what might ensue from such a disorderly chase, and as soon as the whales broke away the little boat made off too. Once more the "hunt" is renewed, but with small hope of success, for the water-giants are at home in their native element, and can make their way so rapidly through the surges that it is almost impossible for the rowers to keep near them. Let us walk a little way up the sloping shore, to where we can better overlook the harbour. Why! it does not seem such a hopeless pursuit after all, for the silly whales have taken the longest route to Balta, and of course the boats have gone by the "short cut" through the middle of the Voe, and have reached the mouths of the harbour first. Alas! poor whales, experience teaches your foe, and this time your doom is sealed. Cautiously and slowly the zealous boatmen turn their prey once more to the head of the

Voe. Carefully and with perseverance the *caa'ing* is continued until the little herd (probably a family party, for their number is small, and there are a mama and baby among them), is driven ashore and unresistingly butchered. We know it is over with the victims now when we see the reddened jets they blow, and the sympathy, which previously was all with the lords of creation, is now entirely given to the conquered leviathans. But I am sorry that the prize should prove such a trivial one, as it will not repay the poor fishermen for all the trouble they have taken to secure it. It was a very different matter with the last shoal which came here. *That* was a *caa* of "bottle noses;" and I have heard it said that there were upwards of one hundred whales. In consequence of there being no regulations or laws relating to the chase and capture of whales, that valuable booty was nearly lost in the same manner as these few we have just seen killed might have been. The prompt skill of the laird, who was heading the chase, did the work of many hunters. Just when the shoal was making off he aimed his gun (which he always carried wherever he went) at the leading whale. Wounded, terrified, and dying, the helpless animal rushed madly on shore, and the whole herd followed in his wake. To a people like the Shetlanders, dependent for their living on the caprices of Old Ocean, such a gift as a shoal of whales is not to be lightly valued, and of course there are many charming legends and superstitions connected with this matter as well as all others in

Shetland. I could tell you of magic reasons why the whales come here. I could tell you of mystic spells which bring the free-born leviathans within the cruel clutches of man, and I could chain your hearing for hours, with wondrous tales of the deep and its many strange denizens.

I could tell of the sly, slimy sea-serpent, which glides about among the surf, with jet black mane, with crest of white glistening foam, and a wily, vindictive eye, and how its powerful glance can lure the fish from the hooks and daunt the heart of the boldest fisher. I could tell of the hideous, hairy monster, with its many waving arms, lying sleepless at the bottom of the sea, watching and waiting for some hapless boat to pass overhead, when he will swiftly rise to the surface, clasp the frail shallop in his horrid embrace, and draw her slowly, silently, and surely down to his watery couch. I could tell of the sad solitary sea-sprites, who wander about among the rocks and coral cells, wailing unceasingly for the hapless fate which dooms them to a thousand years of mortality and then a never-ending death. I could tell of the beauteous mermaidens who bathe their emerald locks in the briny tears of their Father, who haunt the paths of their metamorphosed lovers (*yclept seals* by men) and wreak vengeance upon the destroyers of the beloved, who are sometimes lured into the hands of the human by the bright eye and laughing lip of a handsome fisher lad whose kindness of heart (and superstitious fears)

give back to her native sea the tearful, trembling ocean maid. And I could tell of the troubled souls of the drowned, unburied dead, who touch the surges with their air-born wings, and restlessly roam above the changing and unhallowed tombs of their earthly forms, who visit by night the friends who mourned them, and who taste no peace until the dear, unconscious companions of mortality, the lifeless bodies that they love, are laid below the sod or dissolved into the elements. I could tell of a bonnie bark which left this isle, in long years past, for the little metropolis of our Norland isles, with a fair freight of stalwart men, comely women, and merry children, I could tell how the boat reached her port, how she left again for home with her white sail so proudly set and her gunwale kissing the surf, with the weight of a goodly cargo. Ah! I could tell how wistful eyes looked out for many a day, but never saw the bonnie boat come back, for she had passed o'er the rocky lair of an ocean-chained storm-king and his swift servant-surges had overwhelmed her. No mortal knew how she perished, and only a sorrowing mermaid wept over her. The soft hands of that ocean girl bore up the tiny form of a young child (it had been one of those in the boat), and placed it tenderly on a rugged crag which rose above the reach of tide or tempest. There some sailors found it, and pityingly carried the fair little body to the home it would never know. And so that infant soul found rest. Ah! if I had the muse's wand I would

to accompany her brother on one of his excursions to the cliffs. Bird-nesting among the rocks was one of Yaspas's favourite amusements, and young as he was, he had proved himself to be a most agile and even experienced climber. Ghulda knew how sure-footed he was among the dangerous cliffs, and she had no fear for him ; therefore it was only with feelings of unmixed admiration that she stood watching the bold boy scaling the precipices like a wild cat. It was a glorious scene which lay before the maiden's eyes, and one which she fully appreciated. She stood upon the brow of a low overhanging cliff, and at her feet stretched a glittering line of sand, where the sisters Britta and Suneva were wandering about picking up shells, and throwing out their little lines for the benefit of sundry small fish, called sillacks, which were sporting about in the cool sea.

Far out on the ocean's bosom lay a number of little islands, looking uncommonly like so many star-reflections from the sky, and far in the distance rose the peak of a lofty hill, like some grim castle's tower. On the right hand the cliffs rose gaunt and high, and on the left they dwindled down into a stony path which led to the water's edge.

Yaspas was soon far from his sister's side clambering over seemingly impassable crags and scaring the wild fowl from their nests, but after a time Ghulda found it rather dull work standing alone and watching by turns the nimble young fowler and her humble friends below, she therefore



resolved upon joining the girls and having some fun too. She was not long in reaching them by the narrow path which led to the shore, and soon Yaspar and his egg-hunting were forgotten in the excitement of flinging out the line and drawing ashore the tiny, struggling "water babies." But just as the sun touched the quiet sea and shed a parting kiss over the whole beautiful isle-gemmed ocean, a quick, fearful scream reached Ghulda's ears, and, looking around, what was her horror at beholding Yaspar fall from the cliff above (which, as I said, overhung the sea) and with a sudden splash disappear in the water about a stone's-throw from the shore. Yaspar could not swim, and although he rose to the surface almost immediately, he was evidently too much stunned by the fall to make even an attempt at reaching the land.

Ghulda and her companions stood panic-stricken for a moment, gazing wildly out upon the passive figure which was silently and slowly floating further and further from them; then the strong love in his sister's heart and her ready energy of thought and purpose woke to life, and, turning to the girls at her side, Ghulda said, "Quick, quick, I can save him, give me your plaids!" The long thickly-woven scarfs of home-made cloth were instantly unwound from the slight figures of the sisters, and while Ghulda knotted the plaids strongly together, she explained to her bewildered companions what she required them to do. She fastened one end of the impromptu cable to her girdle, and telling the girls

sisted of a gentleman's dwelling, his farm offices, his factor's cottage, and the comfortable little home his kindness had provided for his nurse. Leebaskerry was held to be haunted, spell-bound, bewitched, fairy-infested, and I-do-not-know-what-all, by the people in the neighbouring islands; and indeed, if good sense had not told you that the peculiarities of its inhabitants arose from the fact of their living in such isolation, you would almost have believed that the strange stories really had a foundation. The laird was a queer, eccentric man, with only one idea in his head, and that one idea was Leebaskerry. He was the sole proprietor of the island, and its history, ancient and modern, its geology, its botany, its ornithology, its rocks and hillocks, moors and mountains, were the subjects which engrossed his every thought.

Seeing that such was the case, you will not wonder that his son and daughter were but ill cared for, and not at all looked after. They had no mother, poor things, except an angel in heaven, who only visited them at night in dreams, and her day-duties were badly executed by Mr Sechman's sister, a decidedly strong-minded old maid.

Yaspar Sechman, the laird's son, was a fine boy of eleven; he had inherited from his southern mother a dark complexion and black eyes, a high spirit, but a sickly constitution. His sister Ghulda had just completed her fourteenth year, and was simply a bright, joyous, healthy, Scandinavian lassie; very imaginative, and strongly imbued with a delicious

But Yaspar's narrow escape did not fade so soon from Ghulda's mind. She could not forget how nearly they had lost him, and somehow she blamed Minie Madge for it all, and took an early opportunity of warning Yaspar to be careful how he offended the witch in future.

Yaspar only laughed, and said it gave him an additional reason for "unearthing the fox," and Ghulda's heart became filled with gloomy forebodings. But despite his sister's fancies no harm came to Yaspar, and, unless that Madge did not speak so frankly to him as of yore, you would never have supposed that a dark design was working in her heart against the young laird.

Ghulda's suspicions had been roused, and circumstances, trivial and meaningless in themselves, she twisted and coloured until she actually brought herself to believe implicitly that Madge was planning some witchcraft against her darling brother. If he was absent an hour she put the whole house in a fright lest something dreadful had occurred. She was too much afraid of the old woman to whisper her fears to any one but the object of her care; and, as I said, he was too brave and single-hearted a boy to participate in Ghulda's morbid fancies.

Unfortunately, "the witch" continued to defy Yaspar's powers of penetration, even became a riddle to her pet grandson, and as nothing occurred to unveil Madge and the mystery, Ghulda continued to cherish her dark belief.

The "sunny season" had almost reached its close. The long nights of harvest were drawing on, and the pale autumn moon was weeping her silent tears over the faded fields. Joyous and glad was young Yaspar Sechman when he thought of the glorious time so near at hand,—the otter-shooting, the chase of snipe and plover, the hunting of rabbits among the moonlit hillocks, and the brave game of football upon the common. Glad, glad indeed, was the happy boy, and little dreamt any one when he went out for his first evening's chase that he would never return. He went alone in the calm eventide with a stream of glittering moonbeams upon his path, and Ghulda thought that the wild "northern lights" had bent their quivering wings and borne him to the Valhalla of his ancestors, so completely was he lost to the isle of his birth, and all trace of him gone.

Yaspar never came back, and there was mourning in the island for the young heir so suddenly taken from the midst of them, but of all who wept over his mysterious fate Ghulda grieved the sorest. She alone knew of Madge's meeting with Yaspar, and her threatening words in the churchyard; and she alone believed that the old woman was privy to her brother's disappearance. It was in vain that Madge (divining Ghulda's thoughts) protested that her hand would never have hurt a hair of his head. In vain Sechman declared that his granddame's sorrow was more vehement in private than that shown by any one else. Ghulda would not listen

to a word in the poor creature's behalf, and secretly registered a vow to unravel the plot, lay bare the old woman's treachery, and avenge her darling's untimely end. All the life and brightness seemed to have gone out of her bonnie face, and instead of trying to overcome the morbid feelings which were clouding her spirits so rapidly, she let them grow and grow until Yaspar, had he come back to life, would scarcely have recognized his blithe sister in the pale, silent girl who haunted the cliffs and dogged old Madge's footsteps like a shadow.

An appeal to Mr Sechman had met with a severe rebuke, and Aunt Jean had been even more stern in her condemnation of Ghulda's charge against so faithful a friend and follower as Madge. Sechman, whose love for the lost Yaspar was only second to that of Ghulda, indignantly exclaimed against her strange thoughts about his granny, who might be a little "odd," but was certainly *not* so wicked as people imagined.

The factor's family were the only persons who sympathized with the jealous sister, and they entered warmly into all her fancies with regard to "Minnie," confirming Ghulda's dislike to the poor old woman by rehearsing all manner of absurd tales regarding her. The young lady listened eagerly to these confirmations of her fancy, and after each conversation renewed her vow.

Notwithstanding her mad infatuation, and the superstitious fears which swayed her mind, one could not help pitying Ghulda. She had spent a

lonely childhood until her little brother came, and then she had twined around *him* all the golden links of her love. It was she who taught him to walk, to read, to row; to love the wild legends of their native land; to love its wild scenery and its countless natural beauties, and when he came no more to her side she felt as a grey ruin that has suddenly lost its clinging, covering ivy, and shivers barely in the face of day.

When the first great shock had passed over, Mr Sechman went back to his library, and Aunt Jean to her store-closet. All the little affairs of Leebaskerry returned to their old routine, and except that the slight, active figure of the happy boy was seen no more, and where a brother and sister had been wont to revel in the sunshine and wake the rock-echoes with laughter, only one quiet girl wandered sadly alone; except for these things, the memory of Yaspar was as if he had never been.

You may be sure the Yule that followed quickly upon these events was anything but a joyous one to the inhabitants of Leebaskerry. There came a dismal fall of snow, and such continued storms of wind and wave, that no communication could be held with the neighbouring islands.

It was well for the little colony that Miss Sechman's stores were so large and varied, and well for everybody's comfort that the farm supplied every necessary of life; well too that the Laird kept a useful medicine-chest, and that Minnie

Madge could administer its contents with great skill.

No triumphant Christmas bells rang out their glad tidings on that storm-beat isle, for the church among the graves was roofless and long since forsaken by the living, and when the lone islanders gathered around the hospitable board spread for them in their master's kitchen, and spoke of Yule stories, no mention was made of that most blessed tale of all—the wondrous birth of the great Redeemer. It was not a strange omission, although it sounds heathenish enough. The fact is, Yule in Shetland is not Christmas in England. Beneath every roof in Hialtland, not excepting those of the upper classes, it is the jolly festival of olden times that is celebrated—the Yule of the Vikings—the season dedicated to the warrior-gods. When Christmas and New Year's-day were changed, the Shetlanders held fast by the *old* reckoning; therefore, their Yule day is the sixth of January, and their year begins on the thirteenth. There is not a vestige of the religious element in Yule as “kept” by the Shetlanders. They do not recognise its identity with Christmas, and it seems best so, for it would be a strange blending of things to celebrate our Saviour's birth, and a thousand ancient customs which had their origin among the heathen gods, on one and the same day.

I know that Ghulda looked out on the white-robed earth when the twenty-fifth of December came, and thought of the dear mother who had taught

her to reverence that day, and a sad, wistful remembrance went forth to the merry boy whose kiss had heralded in the last new year, but beyond that there was no notice taken of England's "time of peace and plenty." It was just the old, old ways, and "old ways" are hard to change.

But there was no merry-making this Yule, no enlarged circles of friends, no dance in the big barn, no fun, no excitement. Yasper had taken all that with him, and when the Laird had called his retainers as of old, that they might drink his health, his arms trembled and he could scarcely hold the flowing bumper which it would have been bad luck to receive from any hand but his.

Tears fell from every eye when Ghulda's low voice said,—“When you fill your glasses to-night, let it be in remembrance of him who is absent for the first time”; and so effectually did her words dissipate every mirthful thought, that scarcely a smile went out on the Yule breezes to tell the warrior-spirits in the halls of Odin that *their* memory lived in Leebaskerry.

And so the days went past, and the weeks and the months, and a year made many changes in the island as well as in the rest of the world. An old sweetheart of Aunt Jean's returned from years of wandering in the new world, and the "elderly person" took it into her head, as elderly persons often do, to go and be married. I do not know why Ghulda should have been vexed at this, but somehow she *was* annoyed, and quite glad when the ancient couple

left the island for a home of their own. Perhaps the Laird did not feel so comfortable when his good housekeeper left. Perhaps he pined for some one to come about him like the sunlight. Perhaps he sorrowed for his son more than folk knew about. Perhaps he came to see how vain and fruitless had been the studies of his lost life. Perhaps—ah! who shall say why?—The Laird of Lee-baskerry laid down his mortal part, and was buried beside his wife in the lonely dell.

Poor Ghulda could not see that she *needed* all these things to show her the “right way,” and when she was left alone she murmured against her hard lot, and believed that no one was so sorely tried as she. Her aunt asked her to come and stay with them, but Ghulda clung to the old place, and distinctly refused to leave it even for a short time. In this fashion the sad-hearted girl hugged her care and grief until they seized upon her enfeebled frame, and brought on an illness which nearly cost her her life. She had no relation to come and tend her pain-racked form, and kiss away the tears of anguish which were always clouding her eyes; but she had one faithful, if humble, friend still left. It was Minnie Madge who sat by Ghulda’s bed all day and all night, who smoothed her pillows and fondled her bright hair as a mother might. It was Minnie’s tears which fell when the wailing cry went forth,—“Yaspar, Yaspar, darling, come!” It was the *witch’s* prayers which were uttered unceasingly for the hope of the old house. It was *her*

arm that raised the weary head, *her* voice that cheered the sinking spirit, *her* care, *her* love, *her* untiring zeal which brought the girl back to health and strength.

When Ghulda was so far recovered that she could note what was going on around her, she observed with pain and surprise the part which Minnie was playing. It grieved and astonished her to find how wrongly she had judged the good old woman. Nurse read the Bible aloud for the invalid, and Ghulda unhesitatingly told herself that Minnie could not be wicked and do *that*. Somehow the fever had opened her eyes to many things, and had inclined her heart to draw more favourable conclusions with regard to Minnie. Incidents which before had condemned her in Ghulda's belief, now seemed so trifling and absurd that she could scarcely forbear smiling when she thought of them. The tender love which had done so much for Ghulda could never have planned Yaspas's death, and tearfully did the poor girl acknowledge to herself the injustice of her conduct towards the faithful servant of her family.

Ah! do not fret, young folk, when you are laid down on a bed of sickness. It is the best cure for all youthful folly or sin. A week in bed will do more to eradicate a serious fault in a boy or girl's character than many other things. You know young days go past so swiftly, and with such sweetness too, that we cannot spare time to reflect on this and that; but illness takes fast hold of us,

and compels us to stop and listen to warning voices, and holy instincts ; and so, as I said before, bodily disease may sometimes bring about what nothing else will. In Ghulda Sechman's case it brought about a full confession of her unkind feelings, and a perfect reconciliation with Minnie Madge.

The good granny smiled pitifully on her charge when she heard her story, and with frank good-nature she allowed that there had been blame on both sides. "You see, my pretty little lady," she said, "I overheard your talk with the dear boy, and I felt so petted about it that I thought there would be no harm in giving you both a little fright, and so I made believe to do some of those absurd things which have impressed you so strongly with the belief in my witchcraft. I sorely repented of that when I saw how seriously you took the matter to heart, and the young laird going as he did, cut me up so that I never could venture to mention the subject."

"Ah! Minnie, I have been very blind, else I must have seen that the accident which occurred before my eyes, was but a warning of what must naturally have ensued from allowing a venturesome child to go alone on such dangerous excursions. If I had only looked at it so ; it did not need witchcraft to charm him away. My dear, dear brother!"

"Well, Miss Ghulda, I scarcely like to tell you even now all that I know, because it may bring back some of your odd notions, but the fact is, I

do *not* believe your brother came by an accident that night, and I am *sure* he did not die then."

"What do you mean, Minnie?"

"I mean just this—a few months after we lost him, I found something on the beach which I will show to you."

Madge hurried away, but soon returned carrying in her hand a piece of wood about two feet long, and half as broad. Tightly lashed to the side of the board was a small clasp-knife, such as boys delight to use, and below this was rudely carved in the wood, "Y. S.—all right." Where this mute messenger had come from, or how, was of course a mystery, but that it *was* a token from Yaspas, his sister could not doubt, and with sobs and tears she kissed again and again the newly-found relic of the beloved.

Ghulda was weak and ailing still, and the surprise was so unlooked for, that you will not wonder at her extravagant joy. "Why did you not tell me sooner?" she said.

"I did not know whether you might credit my story, and I did not like to raise hopes which might never be realized, but *now* I know that the knowledge of this will do you no harm either way—you will not doubt the truth of my statement, and you will be content to leave the issue of all things in higher hands."

Ghulda's recovery was more rapid after this, and Minnie's good tidings had so raised her spirits that soon she returned to her old wonted amusements,


and derived pleasure from things which had only served to make her melancholy the deeper. Once more the little pleasure-boat, which Yaspas had gaily christened the "Selkie," was launched upon the quiet voe, and once more Ghulda's fingers clasped the white-tipped oars, or guided the tiny skiff among the skerries, while Sechman and the Manson girls rowed. Once more her pony carried the little lady over the heath and down upon the sand where she had so often challenged her brother to a race, and again her songs and laughter were heard upon the hills.

Ghulda's impatience to attempt some plan for her brother's restoration could scarcely be kept within bounds, but although many surmises and endless inquiries were made, no clue could be obtained, and the anxious friends at Leebaskerry were at last fain to rest from their fruitless attempts, and trust that the future would bring Yaspas back, since no effort of theirs was likely to do so.

Meanwhile, the years flew away on the wing of Time, and sickness, study, recreation, and religion did their good work on the character of Ghulda Sechman. There was no talk now of witches and fairies; no talk of haunted knowes and evil spirits, for the mild teachings of the Bible had enlightened the girl's naturally clear understanding, and had dissipated the clouds of superstition, just as the day-king disperses the morning mists. In quiet hope, and bravely doing her part in the world, the

loving sister nobly fulfilled every duty, and lived believing that Yaspas *would* come.

Three years made Ghulda a bonnie maiden of seventeen, but the "Old Thief," (as some folks are fond of calling good Father Time) did not take from her the simplicity and childlike innocence of her younger days. She was little altered from the time when we saw her first, and when the stormy spring brought disabled vessels to the harbour and weary sailors to the island, the young lady was just as frank and ready with her sympathy and help as if she had been a little girl. The early morning and the dismal close of day saw her often hurrying to the brow of the hill, where she could overlook the ocean on all sides. Many times she went alone, but oftener Suneva and Britta accompanied her, and always Sechman followed to watch over the safety of one so much beloved. It made Ghulda's heart ache when she chanced to spy a "ship in distress" hurrying before the gale and signalling for help that could not come. Sometimes, to her great joy she saw the poor barque gain the shelter of a friendly harbour. Oftener, alas! the dark night came down, and morning brought spars and shivered timbers to tell the sad end. It was indeed a relief to the excitable girl when the storm abated and comparatively mild weather set in; and when there were no vessels to watch or think about, Ghulda could enjoy, with all the deep romance of her nature, the varied moods of the mighty monarch who



seethed and thundered around the island like a baffled giant.

She was standing on the high cliff which faces the east one morning, watching with much interest the movements of a huge whale which was gambolling and puffing close to the rocks, when Sechman drew her attention to a small vessel labouring heavily in the sea, about a mile and a half from the land. The rigging proved that it was a little Dutch fishing sloop (or buss, as it is called), and that she was water-logged and utterly unmanageable was evident from the way she went pitching about.

Ghulda looked on for a few moments, and then she said,—“Don’t you think she is very near that group of sunken rocks, Sechman; surely her skipper does not know about them?”

“There is no chance of her passing them, Miss. Look! there she goes;” and as he spoke, the clumsy tub of a vessel struck on one of the rocks, reeled over like a drunken man, half rose again, and fell forward between the cruel horns of her hidden foe.

“Oh, Sechman! what is to be done?” cried Ghulda. “She will go down in a few moments, and they have no boat!”

“It is very terrible,” replied the lad, “Uncle and the factor are away at Virse in the big boat.”

“There cannot be more than five or six men there Sechman, *I* will go, if you will, in the little ‘Selkie,’”

“*You*, Miss Ghulda!”

"Yes, yes ; there is not a moment to lose. I can pull, you know, as well as any one,—come, do !"

The two ran down the brae as quickly as they could, and across to the pier where the boat was fastened. Both jumped in immediately, and their willing arms soon impelled the light skiff through the water. All differences of rank, all reserve, were thrown aside at the moment when human lives were in jeopardy, and it came as naturally to the young lady to call upon Sechman for help in her noble task as if he were her brother. They had to round a promontory before they could see the wreck, and it was with the utmost anxiety that they hurried on. Just as they reached the point, a confused but loud and agonizing succession of shrieks reached their ears. A few rapid strokes brought the "Selkie" within sight of the breakers—*but no ship was there !* She had gone down, down amid those merciless rocks, and not a trace seemed left. For an instant the young adventurers seemed quite paralysed with horror, but Ghulda's perfect presence of mind soon returned. "Let us hurry on," she whispered. "We may still save a life."

Quite silently they resumed their oars, but although they pulled quickly and well, it seemed an age before they reached the fatal spot.

Their young hearts gave one great bound as they neared the breakers, for a feeble voice called to them to haste. Clinging to the seaweed which floated round the uncovered brow of a jagged rock they saw *one* man.

"Keep her steady—so, Miss," said Sechman. "Now lean to that side—never mind me. There my lad, give's your hand; keep her balanced, Miss. Ah!"—and the rescued lad was lying senseless in the boat, and Sechman's coat was flung over the wounded face.

"Now, let us pull,—beg your pardon, lady, but it is for life."

No other remnant of the lost ship was seen, and Ghulda turned the boat landwards.

The young lady and her humble friend exchanged no words on the homeward voyage. Occasionally they glanced at the motionless figure at their feet but that only urged them faster on, and there was no time for talk. They neared the land again, and all the inhabitants of the island were on the beach to receive them, for Minnie Madge had seen them go and had given the alarm. As the "Selkie" touched the pier a dozen eager hands were stretched to welcome Ghulda back from her perilous voyage. She sprang out of the boat and up to the beach, and then turned back, and Sechman, assisted by Minnie Madge, alone lifted the young stranger in his arms, and following his lady's footsteps, they laid at Ghulda's feet the form of her brother Yaspar. She knew him the instant she looked upon his face, and Yaspar opened his eyes in time to see himself gathered fondly up in his sister's arms, and to feel her tears and kisses upon his brow.

* * * * *

"How did it all happen, Yaspar?"

R

"Not so romantically as you would like, I fear, Ghulda, it was all owing to a sheep!"

"A sheep?"

"Yes, indeed, and, if you will be still, I will tell you all about it. You see I was prowling after the rabbits that night, when I saw some men come skulking up the hill, and feeling sure they were after no good, I watched them. They disappeared over the knowe for a short time and then returned, carrying one of father's sheep, and some fowls and corn from the yard. I was a good deal astonished, as you will believe, and then all my heroic dreams came over me, and up I jumped, like a fool, and challenged the thieves to stand and deliver. They did not understand what I said, for they were Dutchmen, but they knew that a dog can bark if he should chance to have no teeth, and so they thought it wisest to muzzle me. In plain English, they carried me off for daring to interrupt their marauding expedition. They were of the crew of a *Buss* which was lying-to near Leebaskerry. She was on her way to the Iceland fishing, and they were come on shore under cover of night, and by the directions of some kind neighbours across the ferry, to pick up 'something fresh' for the voyage. They stowed me down in the cabin, and while they were getting ready for the start, I devised and sent adrift that original message, which I am glad to hear 'came to hand.' The lubberly fellows kept a tight watch upon me, although I must own they were kind too. They always took me with them during the fishing season,



and I really felt much happier at sea, for when in Holland, I always had a 'guard of honour' at my heels ; and besides, Dutchland and its female world is—ugh ! you know all the rest, but I must tell you that when we came past Shetland, and the Buss was so unmanageable, I almost *wished* that what really occurred might take place. Does it not look like retribution ? I can forgive the poor wretches, for they have been awfully punished. Not one could swim, and when the Buss went down they all sank too, like so many lumps of serpentine. And, Minnie Madge, dear old nurse, I should go down on my knees to *you*, but you say Ghulda has made it all right. Hurrah ! then, and I hope all witch's tricks may end as happily and prove as groundless as yours have done."

A PETTED SHELTYE.

IT had been the ambition of my sister's life to possess a real live pony of her very own ; but she was only the daughter of a country doctor, who could ill afford to give handsome presents, even to an eldest darling, and so Mary had grown quite beyond her teens without the much-coveted treasure. Some people have *a gift* of getting out of scrapes, or attaining the goal of their wishes, and such an one was Mary. I think she set herself to knitting, and, being a proficient in that truly Shetland accomplishment, she speedily gathered enough money of her own earning to buy that other truly Shetland thing—a pony. So we came to know Chance. He *was* a beauty ; stout-made, dark brown coat, bushy tail, and long shaggy mane, eyes of the most humid brown, but which could give forth a gleam of very wicked spirit when they liked. I was only ten when Mary became the owner of this most perfect Sheltie, but even at that early age I was a worshipper of horse-flesh, and I can quite recall the sensation of pleasure which I felt in seeing the pretty creature led up to the door with the side-saddle on ; and when my sister tripped out and mounted, and when *he* danced about, not

quite understanding or (as yet) appreciating the delicate burden which he was called upon to carry, and when there came a little fidgetting on Chance's part, and a decided display of will in the small firm hand and determined lip of the rider, why, then I felt—well ! just goose-skin all over with rare delight and enjoyment.

There had been a lovely little pony of our brother's about the place for some years before, to which I was much attached, but Jack had very lately been spirited away by one of my bug-bears, the horse-dealer, and as my heart was somewhat sore still on the subject, I was very glad to elect Chance as my prime friend of the equine race.

I took upon myself the chief care and petting of my sister's pony. It was my joy and privilege to lead him to the water, to gather fresh grass for his lunch, to pilfer a few handfuls of growing oats for his supper, to comb his sleek coat, and tie a ribbon in his mane ; to assist at his saddling, and to scamper him about the fields until Mary was ready for her ride ; to lead him to the gate, and to watch, lovingly, as the bonnie pair trotted over the hill.

The picture they made is before my eye now, a picture common enough, but beautiful always. A graceful girl, in fanciful habit of sober tartan, drooping straw hat, flowing hair, shining eyes, and light figure, swaying to the gentle motion of the spirited little steed.

Although it was always a ticklish job for a

gentleman to attempt mounting Chance, who seldom failed to unseat even a good rider at some unwary moment, he never demurred at us girls using him. He soon became very familiar with us, and fond of my sister and myself. As I grew taller, I liked to believe that the likeness to Mary became greater, and I am sure that Chance must have held that opinion also, for he was equally attached to both. I taught him to scamper round and round the fields after me, and to stop when I did, to come to the window for bread when called by name, and many other tricks. My sister always carried biscuit in her pocket when she was out riding, for the benefit of her pony, who would sometimes halt at the end of a famous gallop, and turn up his sancy head to claim the dainty bit he felt he had justly earned. Although Chance could appreciate lumps of white sugar and morsels of cake, there was nothing he would refuse to eat. I have often taken out a plate of soup and watched while he eagerly sucked up every spoonful, and once I remember giving him a salted herring, and feeling my conscience smite me when Mary returned from her ride, and complained that Chance had been unusually lazy, making a pretence of stopping for drink at every burn to which they came.

Chance was usually put out on the common to graze, and as his favourite haunt was almost a mile from the house, and he would not allow himself to be caught by everybody, it was sometimes a diffi-


cult and uncertain business to count upon his services. How proud I was that Chance never refused to come when *I* was sent to bring him home, and I have few recollections so sweet as those connected with my rambles after him. In the bright early morning, when few people were astir, and the dew was beginning to tremble heavenwards—when lark and linnet were busy at their matins, and the sea-gulls were dispersing on their day's avocations—when the snipe was quivering its wings over the marsh, and the plover was waking up from dreamily comparing its purple breast with the heath flowers around it, then I used to go out and dawdle over the hill, dreaming such dreams as the unfettered imaginations of a country girl teaches her. Coming to the top of the brae, which looked down on peat bogs, a green field, and winding sedge-clothed burn, I would call aloud, "Chance, Chance!" and straightway from among some group of wild, lawless ponies, I would see a brown shaggy head raised quickly, then a pleasant neigh of recognition, and my friend would come trotting to my side, take the bread or sugar I had brought for him, and quietly submit to the bridle being put on, and myself mounted on his broad back, which I had early learned to use as a—*not* comfortable side-saddle.

My sister's health often made it necessary for her to winter in a more genial climate than that of Shetland, and when such was the case, she gave Chance to my care, with free permission to use

him when I pleased. I am glad to think now that I never abused what seemed to my childish mind a very great charge. I would not have galloped him uphill for anything, I would not have pushed on after a long ride for worlds. I tended him very carefully, and, ah, me! for the happy hours spent in rambling over the silent hills, when the moonshine was out, making all the landscape nigh as bright as day. Ah, me! for the castles planned, but which never were built. Ah, me! for the time when my heart could take pleasure in the moonlight on frozen hillocks, and when I sought no better companion than the four-footed creature carrying me so lightly along.

Rejoice, bright youth, in that time; enjoy the days of childhood while they are yours; ay, and give your Father thanks for giving *you*, in that early time, a power of drawing pleasure from the veriest trifles. That power will flit away as your life goes on, for as you grow older, you go further from the heaven which always keeps its door ajar for little children, and the aftertime has nothing so pure and bright to offer in exchange.

I can recollect very many incidents of our home-life in which Chance bore a part, and I am fain to acknowledge that his tricksy disposition was oftentimes the cause of what might have been a serious accident. Once a very reverend gentleman had presumed to mount our petted Sheltie, who set out quite quietly and sensibly for his ride; but just when they had gone far enough to make the



rider fancy himself secure, and consequently off his guard, down went the pony's head, up went his heels, and into the dust was flung a highly respectable minister of the church. I was fearful that the gentleman must be hurt, but when I saw him gravely rise up, and look around him with much the same solemn expression which he often wore when standing up in his pulpit to give out the psalm, I could not resist the impulse to laugh most heartily, and he was a very good fellow, for he laughed too, then mounted his treacherous steed, and "took it out of him" for the rest of that day.

What a large and merry party we were one summer's morning, when we set out for a scamper to the Norwick Sands! We were short of riding-gear, and the gentleman who rode Chance made sundry jokes about there being only a bit of tape between his precious person and mother earth—that was all the girth his saddle possessed. We had to cross a damp strip of sand, which looked uncommonly "quick," but as no persuasions would induce some of the party to believe that it was dangerous, they pushed in, and were half smothered before they knew where they were. Chance being at that time stout, elderly, and heavy, and his rider somewhat the same, we looked in horror at their vain attempts to extricate themselves; and I am ashamed to say, that much as I respected our good friend and visitor, my chief sorrow and anxiety were on Chance's behalf. While floundering and

struggling the frail girth broke, and man and saddle were flung to one side. We soon had our friend safe on firm ground, and Chance, free from his burden, speedily sprang clear of the quicksands; and again my first sensation was for the lower animal.

Chance was our pet and faithful servant for many years, and was still in horse-prime, when a sudden illness deprived us of his pleasant services. He could never be induced to enter the door of a stable, but seemed to scorn the refuge afforded under a roof-tree somewhat after the manner of the dwellers in tents, and when it was deemed advisable in his illness to put him under shelter he opposed every effort to that effect; at last I went out, and standing in the stable, stretched out my hand and called him in the old fond way. Immediately he came to me, and after patting him for a few moments, and suffering some real heart-pangs, I went away, and our pet, our friend, our companion, died that day.

I cried very sorely over poor Chance, for I had never known (in my happy youth) any heavier trouble than the parting from a dumb creature. But even now, when the bitterest sorrows of life have passed over me, I do not call them wasted the tears I shed, in "pleasant spring," over a pet pony.



THE BOY FOWLER.

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I WAS sitting on the brow of a cliff, listening to the tales which my old nurse recounted. When she strayed away I fell a dreaming over legends of the place; and while I dreamed, voices of the deep took up what nurse had laid down, and in their own grand mysterious tones repeated this story to me:—

He went out alone in the early gray of the dawn. A widow's one son with all the brightness of youth, with all the sunshine of seventeen in his happy face. To his quiet Shetland home there came no trouble; and all that fond motherly care could do to make his boyhood glad, had been done for Olaf by her whose heart had known no rest since the sea had swallowed up her husband, ere the boy came to claim a father's love.

He went out alone, with the morning beams upon his brow, and his face turned to the great ancient rocks where he was wont to worship nature in her grandest moods. Oh! how he loved them—those gaunt barren cliffs which girdled his island home. How his passionate young heart became knit to the rocky land. He knew no pleasure so

keen as clambering among those crags with only the screaming seafowl near, and the solemn ocean thundering forth its mighty anthem far below his feet. And he went—the bold, bright, handsome



CRADLE OF NOSS.

boy, with the dark clustering curls of his Danish fathers, with the light step and slender figure of one who "toiled not," with the smile of inborn



happiness, with the radiant eyes that never cared to look into the future. And thus he went.

Among the rocks were the brooding sea-fowl ; the pale, soft tern, darting here and there on pointed wings ; the sober guillemot in its mourning garb of black and white, the fussy compact puffin uttering its angry cry ; the sage cormorant, the gentle lady Kittywake, the watchful gull,—all on nestling “cares intent,” and giving a wondrous life to the cold grim rocks which they, with the boy, called “Home.”

With his light basket across his shoulder, and with no foothold, no fear, Olaf swung himself from crag to crag by the aid of a rope attached to the turf above ; while around him flitted the myriad sea-birds, whose haunts he thus dared to invade. Sharp and wild were the cries of the feathered things, as, poised in air, they watched the hardy fowler rob their nests of eggs and callow young ; and oftentimes their wings touched his crisp locks, as, bending nearer, they implored his mercy or invoked his compassion.

Up, from her pearl couch beneath the waves of a tinted cave, rose the mermaid Ona ; up through the clear water, on the light breath of her ethereal being, a vision of perfect loveliness ; and, as she floated on the bosom of a foam-flecked wave, her starry eyes looked wistfully around for the lad whose bold spirit could carry him into the awful places of the earth. Often had Ona watched him on his venturesome errand, when he little dreamed

of such a presence near; and too readily had the soft heart of the ocean girl gone forth in a longing dream of the manly boy. Well she knew what the discordant voices of her guardians meant. Well could she interpret the cries of her feathered friends; and a pleasing thrill passed through her frame as she hailed the sight of Olaf hanging over the cave, with one slight arm wound about the cord which was his sole salvation.

There was a tumult of wild ecstasy in Olaf's breast—an ecstasy he had often experienced before, namely, that joy which manhood feels in daring danger and death. And there never came—oh no! not even *then*—there never came one thought to the boy's rapt mind of *what might be*.

Very low, sweet, and tender was the voice of Ona, as she warbled forth a little wooing song—a song which her heart had stolen from shells that coffin the drowned dead; and Olaf heard.

“Come to the ocean maid, oh, come,
For her heart can never rest,
Can never rest
Till her love is blest,
And deep in the billows of dreamy foam,
Bright Olaf seeks for her sparkling home.
Then come, come.
Come, boy bright, with the raven hair,
With the sweet, fond smile of earth,
Come, the Valhalla's halls to share
With one who will make thee her dearest care,
A daughter of ocean birth.
Come, oh, come :


There is matchless joy
For her gallant boy,
And rarest pleasure that Earth ne'er knew,
Below those wavelets of azure hue,
'The ocean is silent and pure and blue.
The way to her home is soft and new,
Oh, come, dear boy, oh, come.
Ona will sing thy heart to sleep
With wondrous lays of her parent deep,
Ona will weave her utmost spell
To charm the soul that she loves so well ;
Then, Olaf, seek her home.¹
Nymphs of the wave and sons of the sea—
The sea, the dear, the free—
Shall wrap that soul in a mystery,
A mystery wild of the marvellous main
Where never comes knowledge of care or pain,
Oh, come, come, come,
Olaf the bright, the brave,
Down through the shadowy cave,
Lies an easy path through the wave
To her home—to Ona's home.
Long ago her heart she gave
To Olaf—the bright, the brave ;
Then seek her through melting foam,
And come, oh, come."

Over the whirling senses of the boy-fowler passed the mermaid's song, and turning his eyes downwards, they met her tender glance. Spell-bound, he gazed into the azure depths of those wistful orbs, where all the magic allurements of her unknown life lay dreaming. He gazed ; and ever as she sang he gazed, and gazed, until earth faded from his recollection, and no thought was left save that of Ona. And thus he went.

A mingled scream from the winged inhabitants of the cliff; a liquid, musical ripple within the cave; a slender cord dangling from the stones above; and light never more in the quaint Shetland homestead which Olaf had loved, and where he had been so dearly cherished.

Days and nights of weeping, watching, searching. Then the sea-fowl screamed above the cave once more; and a passing skiff found there the dead form of Olaf, floating passively upon the quiet waves. Ah! how darkly gleamed his black hair with the sheen of water on it! Ah! how purely shone his white face and delicate frame, which sea-maidens had lovingly unrobed and given to the restless element; while far, far below its ceaseless motion, the entranced spirit of the boy-fowler lies chained by the sweets pells of mermaiden Ona.

I wish, oh! I wish I could give one note of the mighty refrain which fell from the lips of the monarch Sea, while his surges spake thus to my heart. But far away is that great influence of youthful romance, and faint is the echo which I now recal of his once all-powerful voice—that voice which, in the olden times of love and dreams, could sway my heart and soul as they listed. I wish,—oh, I wish!—



OFF THE NORTH POINT.

THE morning of the 21st of June 1856 rose as calm and lovely from the arms of night as ever fisherman could desire, and it was therefore with a light and hopeful heart that Gilbert Manson slung his haaf bèudie (fishing-basket) over his shoulder, and set out to join his fellow boatmen at the beach, where lay their tiny skiff all ready for her voyage.

Gilbert was an only son, and the pride and comfort of the poor old parents whose sole hope he was. He was a steady young man, and had been for some years the skipper of a haaf-boat—a charge which a careful landlord will seldom entrust to any but the most able seaman. (For the benefit of the unenlightened I may add, that the Shetland haaf-boats measure about twenty-two feet long, are quite open, that is, without any sort of deck—have one square sail, and are manned by five men and the captain, or skipper.)

On this particular morning, Gilbert's father walked to the gate with his son, and shaking his hand, remarked that there was great promise of a fine day for the fishing. "I would fain go with you, my boy," he added, "but my old limbs have failed me now. However, be careful and cautious. In my time we never trusted too much

to a bright sky and calm sea. You know as well as I do what Shetland squalls are. Keep an eye on the east, and when you see the black line coming from the horizon, haul in your lines and home as fast as you may." Gilbert smiled to himself, for his father had made this speech every time his son had gone to the fishing, since he became a skipper—and no wonder that he gave the warning little heed, when it had been repeated so vainly and so often.

However, the superstitions of his very superstitious country seemed in league to forbid our young fisherman from journeying seaward this day. A large raven passed slowly by, and as it passed his side, it croaked a dismal boding three times, and flew away on the left hand. "Now mother would have kept me home if she had heard that," thought Gilbert, and he whistled a blithe Norse song, as he hastened on. On his way to the beach he had to cross the field of an old witch (?), and as he passed the door with a civil good-morrow, he heard the old crone, (who by the way kept up a childish feud with Gilbert, who had in years gone by, played off some boyish trick on the old woman) muttering, "Ill blaws the wind for fair faces and cauld clings the watery shroud round the young and hardy. There will be a few more whumbled (capsized) boats to-night, and mony een sair wi' greeting on the morrow."

Gilbert would have replied with a good-natured joke, for he was an intelligent fellow, and far above

the vulgar fancies which most seamen indulge in, but he was just then joined by one of his crew, who hurried him on that they might not be the *last* to embark for the haaf. When they arrived at the beach they found that their boat had been launched by the other men, who only awaited the arrival of their skipper and his companion ere they started for their venturesome voyage on the ocean. Before Gilbert took his seat at the helm, he looked back in the vague hope that a farewell glance might be following him from a pair of bright eyes which he knew well. He was not disappointed, for, from the window of a cottage which stood by the water's edge, he saw a fair face peeping out, and a 'kerchief decidedly feminine was fluttered for a moment in the fresh morning air; with a glad blush, and a kindling eye, the young fisherman doffed his seaman's hat, and smiled an answering adieu, and many a lingering look he turned landwards, as they ploughed their way through the "trackless main," despite the laughing jests of his merry comrades, who slily rallied their skipper for daring Fate and Fortune, by *looking back*. But Gilbert only laughed, and tossed back the joke on the utterer, then seizing the helm with a ready and skilful hand he turned the boat in a more northerly direction, and soon distanced all competitors for the first place at the haaf. It was almost four o'clock in the afternoon when our friends reached the rendezvous; then they began to lay their lines, and as that takes some time to do, it was evening ere they returned to the first

buoy, which had been thrown out to mark where the fishing-lines lay.

"What a calm day it is!" said Ole, whose duty it was to stand by the sheet and manage the sail.

"Almost too much so to be trusted," added Gilbert, "I fear we shall have wind with a vengeance before morning;" and he cast his eyes towards the horizon where, with the keen glance of an experienced Shetlander, he observed a dark line gradually widening towards the land, while the sea around them could be heard moaning and muttering in that agitated tone which generally precedes a stoam. "I fear we shall have it pretty smart before morning," Gilbert remarked, after a careful and anxious scrutiny of the sea and sky. "What do you say, lads, to landing this haul, and returning to-morrow if fine enough?"

This prudent speech was greeted with loud laughter by his five comrades, who were all brave and enterprising young fellows. One argued how beautiful and promising the morning had been; another, with pretended wisdom, called their attention to the serenity of the sky, and another remarked how quiet the gulls were (those birds generally flutter about very restlessly, or hasten to the shelter of their rocks when a storm is approaching), while one and all unanimously declared against returning home.

Thus silenced, and almost ashamed of his proposal to "run before a puff of wind," as Ole

contemptuously termed it, Gilbert acquiesced in their wishes, but not without many anxious scruples. The men were now so busy baiting their line afresh and talking pleasantly with one another that they did not observe how darkly lowering the sky had suddenly become, and how very ominously white the surf was—but they were startled from their occupations a short time afterwards, by the sudden upheaving of the boat and the as sudden crack with which the squall struck the side of their fragile bark and laid her over to leeward. With a quick exclamation, each man sprang to his post, and with some difficulty their little vessel was righted again. But there was no time for conversation or vain regrets now; the sea was in one whirl of mad excitement—the waves rolled in mountains, threatening every instant to bury, in their fury, the devoted bark, which shivered among the boiling surf as a dove trembles and flutters in the toils of the eagle. The surf broke in crested foam all around them—the wind whistled and raged, and laughed its hoarse laugh of pitiless scorn—the sea-birds screamed—and above all, rose one wild, fearful cry!

The faces of our boatmen blanched white and whiter as they looked at each other, and alas! too well explained by their mute horror the meaning of the awful cry which had even pierced that hurricane's mad fury, and which, it is said, no mortal can forget who has once heard it. It was the last scream of lone and drowning men to

whom no succour could come. Gilbert's heart grew cold for one instant, and a swift thought went home to father and mother (and the *one* dear as either), but, remembering that the safety of the crew depended altogether on *his* firmness and skill, he silently raised a prayer to Heaven, and with renewed courage grasped the helm.

Not a word was spoken for hours—death was in every lurch of the boat—death sat on every huge and angry wave, and thus the night came on, and still they battled against winds and waters which few boats, and few fishermen besides, could have stood against so long. It was little indeed that they could do besides running before the gale, and no easy task was it to keep their frail little vessel from being overwhelmed by the waves which came rolling and yawning for their prey ; with all, they shipped many a heavy sea, and it is a matter of wonderment to me how they ever kept their boat afloat.

One man kept throwing the livers of the fish which they had caught overboard, and this had the effect of stilling the ocean for a time (thus they literally acted the hackneyed phrase of "casting oil on the troubled waters.") Once, while occupied in this manner, Eric, one of the crew, observed a dark object, past which they were rapidly drifting ; the gleaming of the storm-tossed moonbeams showed it to be a boat, but, alas ! the glancing keel upwards told indeed that all her crew had perished. A little further on and the helm, fish-lines, and oars

of another boat proved that the sudden, wrathful tempest had done its work that night. And what must poor Gilbert and his comrades have felt all that long and dreary time on the ocean *alone* ! what must their thoughts have been on thus knowing that those who had left their homes with them, as glad and hopeful as they, had gone so suddenly and so sadly to their last account ?

And this was the fate that stared *them*, too, in the face—this was like to be the end of all. No fond look from wife or child. No mother's arm to support ; no father's voice to encourage. Alone on the wide ocean—tossed here and there just as each wild wave would have it. But those six brave men never flinched from their posts, for they knew no coward fear. Now and then Gilbert would utter some kind word of hope or cheer, but the raging elements rose above the sound, and carried it away ere it reached the ears of his crew.

Towards morning the storm visibly decreased, but the wind still blew fiercely from the south-west, thus driving the helpless boat completely off the land. When the waves had settled somewhat, and the morning had arisen, Gilbert and his companions looked anxiously around in all directions for sight of land, but nothing was to be seen but those deep merciless waves and the cloudy sky. Not a vestige of land was anywhere to be descried, and, to make matters ten times worse, their compass had been swept overboard, along with the fish they had caught, and had so dearly paid for. Thus the last

hope seemed to leave the poor fated fellows, but Gilbert, seeing how it might be, produced from his coat-pocket a small flask of rum and distributed its contents among his comrades. This served as a stimulant, and taking courage, the men returned to the management of their boat. All that day they toiled on : sometimes in imminent danger, for the storm was still considerable. As evening again drew nigh a heavy mist came down and wrapped the ocean in its clammy dusky folds, thus making it more difficult than ever for Gilbert to steer his little bark aright through the ever changing, pathless sea, which offered no landmarks to the bewildered and weary fishermen. And the night came down again, and the wind fell, and their last morsel of food was exhausted, but still the undaunted Gilbert tried to raise the flagging spirits of his crew. When it was almost dark, and the mist hung in heavy wreaths over the sea, one of the men declared that he had seen the form of old Madge, the witch, seated at the bow of the boat ! The mist and spray, with the aid of a heated and superstitious imagination, had conjured up this vision before the poor fellow's eyes, which had been strained and worn out by that weary and anxious time of watching.

Unfortunately, this item of the superstitious and dreadful was all that was wanting to strike terror into the hearts that had held out so bravely and so long. The belief in old Madge's ill-omened presence, and her agency in the trouble that encom-

passed them, was implicitly received by all in the boat, save Gilbert, and one and all threw down the oars (at which they had been toiling for some hours) and gave themselves up to the deepest despair.

"Is *this* a time to let idle and wicked superstitions have influence over you?" cried Gilbert, starting to his feet. "Many a good boat has been lost through panics like these. If you are *men* meet death, since it must come, like men, and as your fathers have done! Return to your posts, and seek strength and aid from Him who alone can give it. He will hear you even from *here*, and can give help even *now*!" The young man spoke in a deep earnest tone of voice, and he raised his eyes as if to ask that aid for himself which he had besought his fellow-sufferers to seek. But his eye kindled with a different ray than that of humble supplication, as his gaze fell on a distant indistinct light which seemed twinkling through the darkness a long way from him—so far that it was ever and anon lost to view. But it was no deceit of the eye. Though the light wavered, yet it could always be seen—a star of hope and joy. Gilbert gazed and gazed for some time with an intensity of expression in his face as if to pierce the gloom of early morn, and explain the meaning of that light which had so suddenly and unexpectedly appeared before him. At last an idea dawned upon his mind, and clasping his hands, the young man exclaimed in broken accents—"Thanks be to God, who has sent us

help! Courage—courage—home is near! Look! (pointing to the distant light)—“see! *there* is the Skerry Lighthouse. To your oars!—pull, pull! It beckons, it welcomes us home! Oh! that blessed light! Thank God! Thank God!”

Who can paint the joy and hope so suddenly rekindled in each weary breast when every thought of succour had been given up? With fervent exclamations of delight and gratitude to their Divine Father, the rescued men returned to their labours, and soon their guiding star shone clear and steadfast a short way off. Nearer and nearer they came, a tried but happy band. With the morning sun's first beams the dreary mist dispersed altogether, and the land of their birth was gained. What need to tell of the transport of unexpected joy which greeted the wanderers on their return to their cottages—the change from profound grief to wild delight? Gilbert's poor old father had, with the friends of the other men, given up all hope of seeing their sailor sons again, but the fond-hearted mother had, strange to say, kept hoping against hope. She *would* cling to the belief that her darling still lived, and when he lifted the latch of the door (though unseen by her), she started up, exclaiming, “There he is! I knew he would come!” The good old couple's joy may be imagined when they actually beheld their son walk in as quietly as if from a walk, and remark, with the characteristic coolness of a Shetlander, “I dare say, friends, *you* have had as bad a time as I have had.”

But though the homes of Gilbert and his five companions were made glad by the return of the voyagers, there were many darkened homes in Shetland that day. A blight had fallen on many a blythe young heart and hoary head. That summer squall had borne the death-bolt in its bosom, and there was grief and despair throughout the islands. Two boats were missing from Unst, and Gilbert's account of the wrecks he had seen, confirmed the sorrow which wept for those who would come no more. A few days afterwards some fragments of wreck thrown upon the shore proved this tale to be true of those who had so wonderfully escaped that night of woe.

All I would add to this "ower true" story is, that the bright eyes which have only once been mentioned in this brief narrative shortly transferred their light to the happy home of Gilbert Manson. I saw their owner the other day standing at her cottage door watching Gilbert as he guided his gallant little bark seawards, and I fancy she was thinking of that 21st of June, for a tear hung on her lashes, but it soon disappeared, and I beheld her shortly afterwards (merry and busy as was her wont) preparing for a grand festival; which was to be celebrated on the anniversary of the day on which Gilbert returned in safety from his perilous Forty-eight Hours off the North Point.

A WILD YULE E'EN.

THERE are mad northern breezes howling over the heather and there are savage blinding showers of snow, which fall in stinging bits and cover up the little dells, leaving only those same wind-waked heather-tops uncovered. There are loud-voiced tempestuous waves and anger-tossed foam, which lift themselves wildly up, as if in their insolent pride they would mingle with the low-lying clouds. There are grey gaunt cliffs frowning over the black water, and there are bare dreary-looking hills, with here and there a solitary cottage, standing unsheltered by tree or wall. It is not a pleasant scene, although, for some folks, it may have a weird beauty of its own. This snow is not like the gentle feathery flakes which robe your naked Christmas boughs in a robe of heavenly white. These gales are not the soft-toned breezes which bear to your expectant ears the sound of Christmas bells. These champing surges are not the light-footed friends who come to greet you with a smile and a word of seasonable cheer. Ah, no! but surely those fierce combating elements are fit attendants on the Yule of our sea-king sires.

"Mother, this is Yule e'en," said little Tronda



Henderson, looking wistfully up in her mother's face.

"Well, what if it is, bairn? we can have no Yule fun, you know," and Doya cast a glance at her husband, who was sitting by the uncurtained window. It was a look which said much: it was a look of sad reproach, of enquiry, of fear, of love; and the children, who sat beside Doya crept nearer to her chair and kept silence when they saw that look.

But Bartle did not notice either the woman or children. He was a sullen, discontented man, who evaded, as lazy ne'er-do-wells will always do, the poor man's honest lot—a life of labour. He was the scion of a good old house which had fallen into poverty and decay. Being too idle and too proud to work for a living, Bartle had left Shetland in his early manhood and had betaken himself to the wild unfettered life of an Australian digger. Years went past, and he came back in his prime and married an orphan cousin, to whom he had been engaged since his youth. He came back a reserved and selfish man, with a shadow on his brow and a strange mystery about even his every-day life. Bartle took up his abode in the half-ruined home of his boyhood, and became a subject of curiosity and conjecture to the whole island. His wife was a "lady born," yet it was known that she did all the work of the house, keeping no servant; and the public also discovered that she "knitted and 'broidered and sewed" for a livelihood, just as any

poor man's spouse might do. They did not mingle with their neighbours, but rather shunned the society of high and low. Bartle had no live stock or banked money; he did no work, either mental or physical, and although he always wore the dress of a sailor, he never soiled his fingers with a fishing line or other marine implements. He always had plenty of silver, nay, even gold, in hand for his own personal wants, yet Doya's deft fingers provided for herself and the three children. Once Bartle had offered half-a-crown to his wife when he chanced to overhear the little ones cry for breakfast, but she gave it back with such a gesture of horror and disgust as deterred him from ever repeating the act. And so they jogged on for many years, living in the same house utterly independent of one another, each going their own way—the mother keeping Rassmie, Hermann, and Tronda by her, and the father shrouded in the same mystery which had hitherto encompassed him.

On this same dark Yule even, Bartle looked out of the window moodily, unconcerned for those within. He looked on a dismal scene. Between the cottage and the sea there stretched a piece of rough stony ground, which hardly allowed a weed to find refuge on it. This meagre morsel of mother earth terminated in a reef of dangerous crags, which were quite covered at high water, but, when the tide was out, extended high and dry between the island and a large grass crowned skerry, which lay a short distance from the mainland. You

could not picture to yourself a more barbarous coast.

The grey of night had come down, and only the outlines of the landscape, with here and there a foam-wreath curling about the rocks, could be descried by the looker-out. Evidently such an imperfect view was not to Bartle's liking, for very soon he got up, donned his seaman's hat of water-proof and without a word left the house. It was not pleasant out in that shivering cold, and the sullen man was not a good companion, but he had scarcely quitted the cottage ere he was followed by his sons. They were fine manly boys of twelve and fourteen, on whose honest faces lurked no resemblance to the hard features of their father. It seemed that they followed Bartle with reluctance, but certainly with a purpose, and he was not long in observing them. Turning round he addressed the boys savagely, with a "What do you want? where are you bound for you young rascals?"

They hesitated some time, and then Rassmie, as the oldest, replied, "Mother told us to go after you in case you might want help or a messenger, for she guessed you were going to look after the ship we saw locking the land this afternoon."

These were simple enough words, but they roused Bartle's passion in an instant, and, catching Rassmie by the collar, he would have flung the poor boy to the ground, had not Hermann thrown himself on his father's arm, and so prevented the blow from falling on his brother.

"You young scoundrels," shouted Bartle, shaking them from him, "what do you mean by dogging me like this, as if I were a madman who required a keeper, or—"

"A sinner who needs a Saviour," said the meek voice of Doya, who had come to the spot, "Don't be angry with me, Bartle ; don't hurt the poor boys, they are too young and innocent to dream of what *I* know is true, or to suspect the real motive of your going from home at this late and stormy hour. Oh Bartle ! it is years since I spoke to you thus—listen to me. Let me lead you home again, or let us rouse the neighbours, that your already red hand may be held from further crime."

I may not repeat to you all the profane abuse with which Bartle Henderson replied to the timid entreaties of his wife, while the boys stood by, too terrified to move or speak. When he had exhausted his powers of swearing (and they were not by any means limited), and had ordered his wife and children to return to the house, Bartle took his way along the rough beach with a rapid stride and lowering look on his face that it was not good to see. Doya gazed after the figure of her husband until it was lost in the obscurity of nightfall. Her face was very pale, and sad, and spiritless. She scarcely knew what instinct had told her to follow Bartle and speak words which she had never ventured to address to him since the early days of their married life, when first she came to know the dark mystery of his means of livelihood.

The courage which had prompted her appeal had died out before his fierce outburst of anger, and after telling the boys not to go near their father again, the poor woman returned to her lonely dwelling. Ah! not *all* lonely, for the little deformed Tronda was waiting there for her mother's return. The tiny lassie had raked the fire together and swept the hearth, as well as her feeble hands could, and the bright face which she lifted to Doya's shed light warm as sunshine, on the leaden heart of her parent. "Mother, mother, how came you to be so forgetful as to leave me here alone on Yule e'en, and after day set?" A sweet ringing laugh followed Tronda's words, and Doya caught its infection and smiled upon the bonnie-featured, crooked back child, whose infirmities had not prevented her from being (as the "one ewe lamb" always is), the most useful and most beloved member of the family.

"Ah, bairn! I was indeed forgetful, but I have been so short a time away, that I cannot think the fairies have had leisure left them in which to do mischief to you."

"Don't be too sure, mother; I did hear a noise of something hopping about by the churn, and may be you won't get any butter to-morrow; and are you *quite* sure I am just the same as when you left me? You know this," touching her own twisted side, "came of my being left on Yule e'en by myself." Tronda spoke jestingly of course, but

her light words carried a sad pang to the mother's heart.

Folding her arms about the little thin figure, Doya said, whisperingly, "If the fairies took my child that night, or if they brought this life-trouble to her, I dare not repine, for who could be to us what loving, patient, unselfish sickly Tronda is?"

Tronda knew that there were serious thoughts expressed in those words of pleasantry, so she let the Yule joke pass by, and nestling closer to the loving bosom above her, the child asked; "Tell me how it really happened, dear mother, I want so much to know, for although it's all nonsense about the fairies or trows hurting me, still—I should—like to—know."


"How old is my little girl?" Doya answered. "Let me see, thirteen past in September, and not so large as most bairns are at ten; but more than thirteen, ay, more than twenty, in mind and feeling. I have never spoken of my sorrows to any one, but I think my daughter can be my sympathizing friend, so she shall hear it all. It was just ten years ago, on that awful stormy Yule even, of which you have heard folks talk. I was happy then, for your father was kind, my little ones were healthy and beautiful, and I had never looked upon sin in its darker aspects. My little Tronda shall know *all* the story. On that wild Yule even I had put you and Rassmie to bed, and was hushing Hermann on my knee, when I was startled by hearing a succession of shrieks, which seemed

borne to my ear on the wings of an exultant storm fiend. With the baby in my arms, I ran to the door and looked out into the mirkness—just such a night as this,” and Doya shivered, even by the glowing fire ; “ a tempest of wind, bright gleaming moonlight, and flying clouds. Again and again that dreadful cry arose, and, forgetful of everything, I flew down the slope and stood upon the beach. It was covered with bits of wreck—tables, chairs, trunks, hammocks. Near these, up to his waist in the roaring sea, I found your father. Above us, on the height, gleamed a gigantic fire of peat, and among the surf, close beside me, floated unresistingly the blood-stained form of a sailor.—”

“ Oh ! mother, don't tell me more of that. I know, I know ; it is all plain now ! ”

“ Yes,” Doya said, in a dreamy apathetic tone ; “ it's all plain ; *you* know now what *I* knew then. Hours afterwards I returned to the house, with Hermann still innocently sleeping on my bosom, and I discovered that in my absence you had waked up, and finding yourself alone, had tried to get out of bed, and in so doing had fallen against something on the floor, where I found you lying helpless and almost unconscious. It was not trows—no, Tronda ; on that Yule e'en it was not trows that came to injure you—it was a fiend—your own flesh and blood ! ”

The poor feeble girl shrank away in meek terror from the sudden fierceness of Doya's words and gesture. She had never seen her gentle patient



mother in that mood before, but it passed away, and a long painful silence fell upon them both.

Loudly and hoarsely the winter gales roared around the cottage. Sometimes their stormy voices rose defiantly above the boom of the breaking wave. Sometimes they clamoured fiercely against the chafing surge, whose anger they had awakened. Oftentimes they moaned and mourned among the heather, or hurled the "drifting veil" of snow before their impatient pinions deep into some dimpled valley; and you might well have deemed that evil spirits were wandering unfettered over the world, for the sweet christmas heralds could not have bent their bright brows to earth in such a fearful hour. But still, musing and silent, sat Doya Henderson and her deformed child; and the minutes passed into hours, and both were so engrossed with dismal thoughts and forebodings that they never seemed to miss the presence of Rassmie and Hermann. But the same dark demon to whom power had been given over land and sea and human heart—that same "foul fiend" was reigning to-night as then; and again was brought to Doya's ear the wail of bitterest mortal agony. You might almost have thought that she expected it, for when that awful cry rang out on the night air, Doya did not start or look surprised, her face just paled, and she dropped on her knees beside Tronda, whose trembling figure had sought that attitude which instinct teaches us to adopt when we turn to God in our hours of helplessness and woe.

"Pray, mother; pray!" cried the girl. "Pray for father; oh! let it be for him more than all."

Earnest, though broken, were the supplications which rose from those grieving hearts; but their "woman's heavenly part" was interrupted by the hasty entrance of Rassmie and Hermann who rushed to their mother with white and horror-stricken faces.

"We saw it all, oh, mother, we saw it!" they panted forth. "The peat stack had been lighted, and the ship had come on the rocks, lured by the false signals. She went down at once, and then—then we saw father among the crags. Some one floated on shore; and oh, how could he? he—father! struck at the swimming man with his knife, and there was a great cry, and blood among the white surf. Mother, mother! what shall we do? Father saw us beside him there; *his* face was awful, and oh, there may come others, for he was waiting, when we fled to you?"

Tronda had stood up when her brothers came, and as soon as their hurried tale was told, she spoke calmly and with resolution: "We must all go to father. It is not for us to give him to the hand of justice, but we dare not stand still and see murder committed. Come, mother; come, boys; father must be guided by us now," and the small decrepit figure and pinched puny face looked noble and beautiful when the spirit spoke so boldly and undauntedly.

In obedience to a mind stronger than their own,

the others followed Tronda from the house—from the house, down the slope, over the stony beach, under the moonlight, against the gale, to the scene of the shipwreck. There they found no living thing. There were broken spars and floating débris of various kinds, and there was a helpless human corpse, but that was all. In vain did Rassmie and Hermann search among the crags, in the hope of finding their father concealed there. In vain did Doya call upon his name ; and at last they were obliged to believe that fear had compelled Bartle to fly. He had felt that he was safe from discovery while only Doya knew of his crimes, but he could not be so certain of the boys, whose eyes had actually been on him while he committed murder.

They all lingered on the beach for some time, but no one came from either land or sea, and at last the storm compelled them to seek the shelter of their house. You may believe it was a sad, sad night in that lone dwelling, and although the gale calmed down, and the snow lay still and fair when the daylight gleamed upon it, there was no hushing the inward storm. A very dark picture of sin had been presented to young pure spirits, and it was little wonder that their innocent hearts quivered and bled before the remembrance of that dreadful scene.

Morning—Yule morning—with its merry breakfast by candle-light, frothing bowl of "whipcull," and sweetest of short cakes for the rich ; its



"burstin" and rarely-tasted bacon, with jolly drams of whiskey for the cottagers; and its fun and mystic spells, and football and evening dance, and olden tale and Norland song for both high and low. Morning—Yule morning—brought the discovery to all in the neighbourhood of the disastrous shipwreck on the island. Doya and her children sat in the house and saw the gathering crowd hurry to and fro upon the beach. They saw when the poor sailor's body was found, wounded, as the simple islanders supposed, by their own cruel crags; and all the day long the wife and children of the wrecker watched and waited, but no one came to them. The corpse was conveyed to an uninhabited dwelling close by, and decently buried next day; and Doya fell mechanically into all her accustomed duties. Curious people wondered what had become of Bartle, and somehow a story got about that he had deserted his wife, because she had taunted him with having taken her from a life of ease to one of hard and humble work. Those who believed such a tale had surely observed little of Doya's meek contented acceptance of her lowlier lot; but she was quite willing that the inquisitive neighbours should accept that solution of Bartle's conduct. That he had fled from his home and family she knew was true, but the reason, ah! how different from what was supposed.

The events of that most eventful Yule e'en had worked a great change in Rassmie and Hermann.

They were sharp enough lads, and had a pretty shrewd guess that their father gained his livelihood by rescuing from the deep its unlawful prey, but that he employed such criminal means for that end they never dreamed of. The appropriation of wreck was viewed, with smuggling, as a very light offence by the Shetlanders, who, at the same time, would have shrunk with horror from such crimes as those which Bartle had committed, and however little the boys might have thought of the sin against human codes of morality, they saw in all its deepest blackness the enormity of their parent's offence against Divine laws. Therefore, as I told you, these things went a great way to work a change in the characters of the lads, adding to their hatred of sin, and taking away much that was evil in their disposition.

But time, that never flies from the happy nor lingers with the sad, although we often think he is cruel enough to do so; time, whose monotonous footsteps echo along the years at the same even pace, no matter how we smile or suffer; time went on, and marked another season on the tablets of eternity, and as he traced the first lines of the coming year, he also brought back the brave old Yule. Yule came this time with glittering frost and smiling sky, quiet waves and scarce a breath of wind, and Rassmie launched his fishing boat for a day's excursion among the cliffs. Their home was, as usual, unbrightened by festivity, so the good lads persuaded their mother and Tronda to accompany

them on the water, and the four made a pleasant, if sober party. Tronda had seldom been upon the sea, and had seen very little of the sublime scenery so near her home, therefore she easily prevailed on her brothers to row close to the shore, that she might the better admire the varied beauty of the crags and caves. One of the latter particularly attracted Tronda's girlish fancy, and at her desire the boat entered the rock-hewn hall, whose tinted walls gave



ROCKS NEAR REAWICK.

back a thousand silvery echoes of the splashing oars. It was a vast cavern into which the boat had entered, and the further she went the wider and more extensive seemed the boundaries of that ocean home. Even Doya's broken spirit seemed to share in the enthusiasm of the young people whose exclamations of rapture mingled with the shrill cry

of the brooding sea-fowl, and the whispering of the billows. But suddenly Tronda's voice changed to a scream of terror, and she pointed to a ledge of rock in one of the deepest recesses of the cave. There lay what at first appeared to be merely a heap of ragged clothing, but which contained, too surely, a human skeleton. Rassmie's first instinct was to turn his boat and fly from the horrible sight, but his mother was quite above the vulgar fears of the ignorant, and, after she had by her quiet mein and pious words reassured her children, their skiff was gently impelled nearer to the object of their alarm. There was nothing loathsome about those poor mortal remains; only a few whitened bones, huddled within the folds of a seaman's dress, and a fleshless hand spread out upon the chilly stone. He had escaped from drowning by the help of a little boat, whose broken bits, cast up beyond the reach of the sea by some unusually high tide and storm, spoke to so much of the sad tale. On that hard bed of shelving rock the unfortunate man had met a more dreadful death than that of the engulfing wave. Unheard, unsuccoured, he had died of starvation.

"What had we better do, mother?" said one of the boys, after a long silence, which had been employed by the young people in gazing upon the miserable spectacle of man's helpless humanity, and in gathering up the courage which had so suddenly deserted them.

Doya did not reply, and the pallor and anguish



which had fallen so suddenly upon her features gave much alarm to her children.

"Are you ill, dear mother? What is it?" they queried.

When at last she spoke, her voice trembled, and her figure shook with the force of some inward trouble which she evidently tried to conceal and overcome. Having summoned all her strength of mind, she said hurriedly—"No one must come here, no one must know of this but you and I. Children, children, the guardian spirit, who never forsakes its charge, has guided us here."

By the mother's direction, Rassmie and Hermann landed on the little strip of sand which carpetted the further end of the cave. There they gathered together some bits of wood belonging to the broken boat, and, clambering up the rude walls, they deposited the spars on a ledge close to that on which the sailor lay. Then Doya got out of the boat, telling her children to return to the mouth of the cavern, and linger there out of sight until she called them. They were reluctant to leave her alone in such a place, and with such a task as they rightly guessed she had set herself to do, but obedience was the first lesson these young people had learned, and reverence for their mother and her wishes was the consequence of her wise training.

The oars were dipped into the quiet water, and in a few moments Doya was alone with *it*. Ah! who but a wife would have knelt so tenderly by

that ghastly object, and wrapped it in the folds of her cloak? who else would have laid her living lips on the bleached and bony palm, and have recognised in those unsepulchred bones something she had once loved? Who but a wife, whose young affections had been altogether *his*, would have forgotten the sin and sorrow, the neglect and unkindness of years, and have thus cared for the poor remains of a wicked man?

Doya knelt long and prayed by her husband's corpse, then with reverent hands she wrapped it closer in the shroud she had taken from her own person for that purpose, and while doing so she found among the skeleton fingers a small pocket-book. With an eager hope she opened this message from the departed. The sleeve of the dead man's oil-skin coat had protected the paper from destruction, and the words which Bartle's dying hand had pencilled on the leaves were easily deciphered.

This is what he had written:—

"My wife and children, forgive me, God has done so. I am dying here, within a short distance of you all and home. I do not know how many days I have been here. It seems like ages. No help can come to me, and I am beyond the reach of being heard. I fled from your accusing eyes, and the boat carried me here. She was tossed like a weed on the rocks, and I have crawled up hither to die a harder death than any I ever dealt. It is the meet reward for all my crimes—


that I know; but I am not alone, and I am forgiven. Try to think kindly of me. I have been very wicked, but now I am at peace, and dying. Something whispers you will know my fate, my children, my wife."

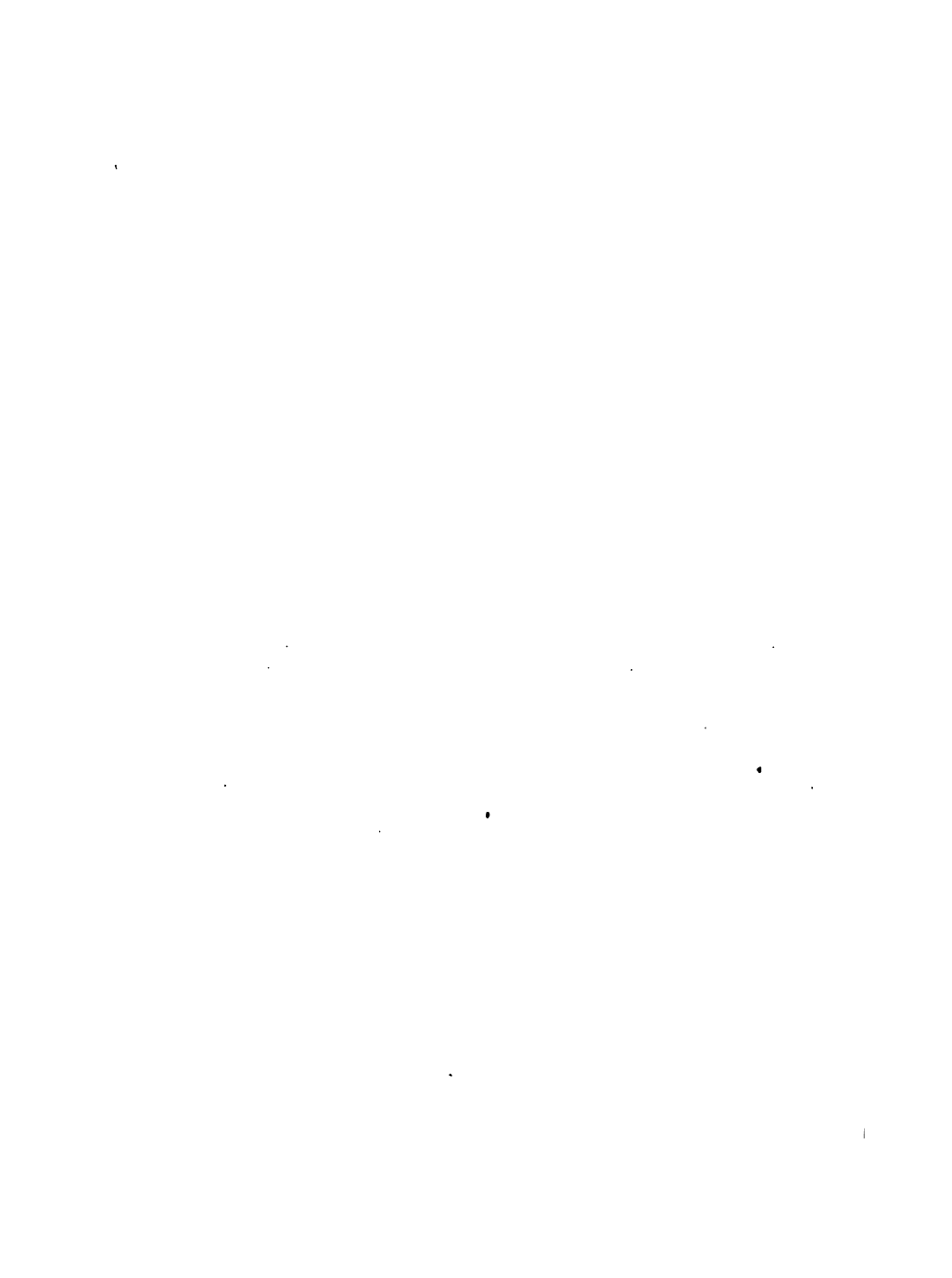
Could anything have been of such infinite value to Doya as those parting words? They washed away every trace of bitter or offended feelings, and when she placed the precious relic in her bosom, she blotted out from its generous heart every remembrance of Bartle, save their early love and his christian death.

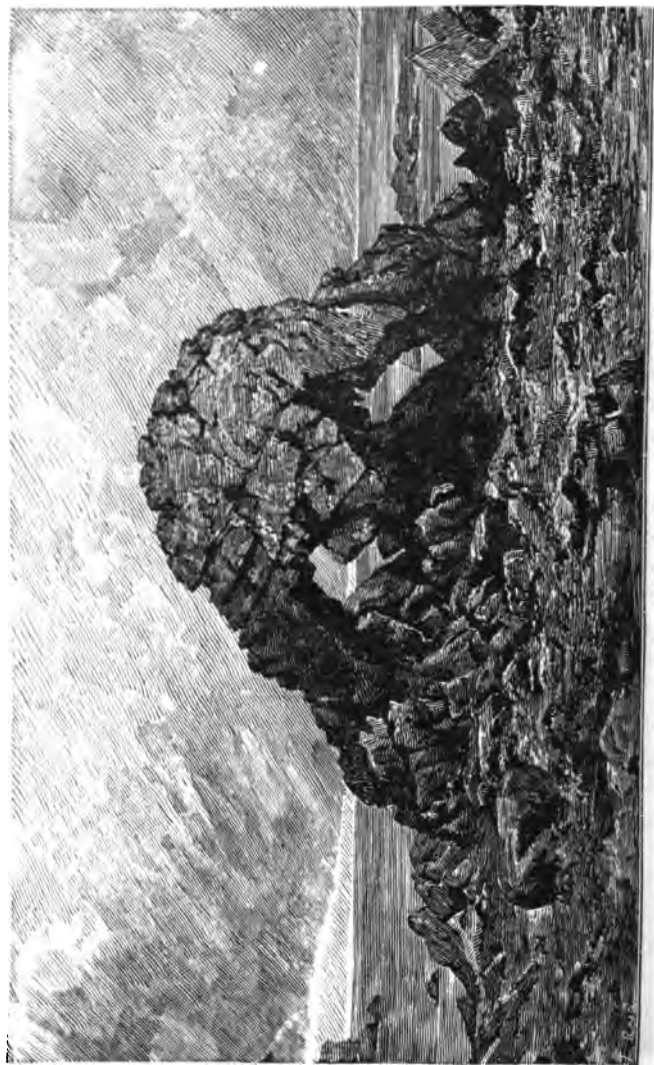
Very slowly, very tenderly, Doya encased the withered form in the broken bits of wood, lashing them around it by means of some fishing lines which they had chanced to have in the boat. Very carefully she attached some pieces of rock to the rope and then, after one long lingering look, and a silent, earnest prayer, she let it slide gently down into the calm limpid ocean. The waves gave one low gurgling sigh as they opened to receive that strangely buried thing, and Doya, kneeling on the cold stone, strained her sight to see the very last of her husband. The clear water hid nothing from her, and she saw him sink to rest down below the sea. And then the tide bore a floating mass of weed, glittering brown and crimson, to the spot, and laid it over poor Bartle, who slumbers peacefully there in that wild cavern cradled by the surf, and lulled by the wind. And surf and wind say, better than sculptured stone, that mercy endureth

for ever, and He, our Father, and our Judge, is long-suffering, and doeth all things well.

It was some time ere Doya could venture to break the awe and quiet of that scene by summoning her children. It seemed as if she had parted from every earthly trouble, as she knelt there alone and pressed to her heart the token of her husband's repentance, as she knelt there alone with nature's sublimest voices speaking to her soul; but slowly her thoughts came back to life and earth, and at her call the boat glided into the cave again. Then, as the boys rowed slowly homewards, Doya told them the end of the story. They had guessed it already, but they were not prepared for the surprise which she had in store—the reading of their father's parting words. That took away almost all the sorrow. Under the moonlit sky of Yule, with Yule stars looking down like eyes of forgiving love, and Yule Zephyrs winnowing by like the rustle of angel-wings, when they hurry to earth with Christmas messages of peace and good will, of mercy and pardon; with Yule frost glittering upon the heath, Doya and her children returned to their home; and when Rassmie clung to her neck, and Hermann's head nestled on her bosom, while Tronda's sweet voice whispered, "You have us, mother," Doya's sorely tried heart was comforted.







CROW STACK—FAIR ISLE.

SOUVENANCE OF TRAVELLERS.

EVERYBODY travels in this golden age. I wonder if "Everybody," rushing here, there, and everywhere, give many thoughts to their influence on the places and people they visit like birds of passage?

The tourist gathers, during his summer's holiday a store of refreshing experiences and of happy memories—Food for many a thought, for many an hour of chat in the home-circle. He brings back from his journey many a precious souvenir, many an object of scientific interest, many a valuable addition to our knowledge of men and things. Does he ponder often, of what he has unconsciously left in the lands he visited? When I was a happy child in my remote northern home one of my most delightful pleasures was the arrival of a stranger in our island.

In all localities situated at a distance from the great centres of civilization the society is naturally circumscribed and wears a sameness which inevitably leads to stagnation, or gossip. It may be easily imagined therefore with what joy individuals living in such circles hail the advent of fresh, new, expanded life from more favoured regions.

The facilities for travelling in Shetland were so few some years ago that scarcely anyone but men who wished to prosecute a branch of natural history, and such as were led by more earnest thoughts than those of mere pleasure and sight-seeing, ever made a tour of the islands. But the intelligent energetic Few who are always the undaunted pioneers to an unknown locality—who are never deterred by difficulties—who wrest the secrets of earth from their obscure retreats, and showing them to the world incite a multitude to follow in the footsteps of Science—*they* found their way to our wild home every season, and were welcomed with something almost akin to gratitude. How it must often have touched and amused the denizens of a busy world to be plied with questions about that world as if the questioners *belonged* to it yet *lived* in another planet.

In the ever-varying kaleidoscope of childhood's recollections—between which and clearer vision there has fallen the mist of Time and Tears—is gathered a confused collection of remembrances. The arrival of Lady Franklin and her party, the noble wife's earnest face mixed up with yearning hopes sent from my child-heart after the lost voyagers among Arctic snows, is one of my earliest visions.

Sir Edward Parry and a refugee from the French Revolution have got hopelessly twisted into a very interesting paper which had been printed on board ship when the former's expedition was wintering

among the ice fields I often wish I could disentangle my recollections of the two. The journal (or newspaper,) I distinctly recollect. Various officers had contributed amusing articles. It was *published* weekly, and the budget of ship-news, the poems, riddles, &c., were sparkling enough to rivet even the attention of a very young child. Growing out of these earlier thoughts, and traced in deeper outline than they possess, rises the picture of a weather-tanned Norwegian gentleman who, having chosen the navy for his profession, had almost met the usual luck of a sailor, knocking about our seas. His ship had narrowly escaped wrecking on a small out-lying island of the Shetland group. In the wild winter night this man sat by our fire, for his ship was safe in harbour, and related many a marvellous story of his distant home and the ocean he loved so dearly. I remember how the gales roared that night, and how the lightning gleamed, and how a strange sort of incongruity got into the room in the shape of some horrid mess of raw fish which this man had brought for my father's inspection. The latter exhibited interest enough to *examine*, but the guest *eat* the dainty! and the story which had enthralled me was never finished. I so often wondered what the sequel had been; and I wondered if the sailor and his ship ever reached "the haven where they would be" for they vanished next day from our ken.

Out of this imperfect sketch flies a cloud of sea fowl! whose life was my exhaustless study. Our

island was visited by a dealer in eggs and skins who had been committing wholesale murder among the Birds, and I inwardly echoed all my father's indignant expostulations. I was secretly and confusedly weighed down with grief over his prediction that "if this sort of thing is allowed to go on the cliffs will soon be robbed of their beautiful inhabitants," and then a shake of the Kaleidoscope brings blue sea and sky around me, and I am being carried up the side of a large three-masted vessel from Dutchland. She had put into our harbour for repairs. What senseless jabber the rough language of Holland sounded to my ears, and how glad I felt when the officer who held me spoke kindly a few words of English. Yet there is a mist of awe and fear about it, mingled with a nervous dread of disobeying and disgracing the big brother who had taken us to visit the ship. The men crowded round my sister and myself talking in their unknown tongue, and there was something quite uncanny about it all. I think I eat their queer cakes, and pried into every available corner, but I was not a little relieved, when my friend, who was the doctor of the vessel, carried me back to our boat. When the captain patted my head he spoke of his little daughter at home which eased my mind as to the motives of his attention, but my intellect was too circumscribed to argue from that any reason for his rough men doing the same thing, and I had some very decided ideas on the subject of cannibalism at that time.

What the author of "Proverbial Philosophy" has to do with this I cannot tell—unless that talking and writing what simple folks can't understand have a relationship to each other—but somehow the Dutch men and Martin Tupper's visit to Shetland are side by side in memory's picture room.


Next, I remember listening to a tale more attractive than even that which was told of the sea. The relater was a Geologist and a Professor in one of our universities. I see yet his grand towering forehead, and flashing eye, and the stalwart figure which looked as if it were indeed all-powerful to break open the hard hoary rock, and tear its story from its heart. He told how he had found some rare geological specimens—that was all the tale. But it was the way he told it—the way he flung his soul into his narrative—the glowing language he used, that fixed it all upon my memory, and sent me floundering through books on the subject until I became lost in the depth and awfulness of a study far beyond a woman's comprehension. Out of this chaos of rocks rises a little sentence traced in letters of gold. I think some light-hearted Scotch boys had come to spend their holidays in Shetland, and I caught the incidental mention of one, for I recollect nothing more than "a name, crisp curls, and a beautiful smile" but out of that meagre description grew a strangely vivid picture and when in long years afterwards the dark stream of my life came near where the sparkling current of his being flowed I recognized the likeness drawn

by childhood's imagination, and it was a truthful reality.

There were no lodging-houses in Shetland, at the time I talk of, so that the traveller who ventured beyond the bounds of Lerwick (the only town in the islands) found himself in an awkward predicament if he did not choose to throw himself on the hospitality of the inhabitants. One gentleman I recollect, who looked like Melancholy in masculine habiliments, actually slept two nights out on the common, shunning all society and astonished that he could not get shelter for money! He went from cottage to cottage demanding a *room*, which, had he got, would have involved the turning-out of the household from their home. My father hearing of this, and being also told that the gentleman was "no just wise" sent us off in search of the outcast. What fun it was! How gleefully my small brother and I trotted our ponies from hamlet to hamlet in pursuit of this *queer man*. Every story of him served to whet our curiosity the more. At last he was found. A shy, silent, sad young stranger with violet eyes that had nothing but sorrow in them. Young as I was I rightly guessed that he was "wise" enough, poor fellow! but bearing a hidden grief. He accompanied us home, I think, and being in delicate health gladly availed himself of the rest offered. The violet eyes were not gifted with keen vision and the shyness often lapsed into utter absence of mind, so that a good deal of absurdity became mingled with the graver feelings which his

sad appearance aroused. He never told why he came to Shetland, or where he came from, or where he was going, but he was grateful beyond what was at all necessary for every little kindness, and when he could rouse himself from his depression would talk easily and well. He came and went a mystery, and we girls settled it among ourselves that he had been "crossed in love."

Some people came to Shetland with the idea that the inhabitants were all savages, or something nearly akin to that animal, and we took our fun out of them accordingly. A learned Cockney who dropped an H whenever he could, and added an R where it might have been lost and never missed, was kind enough to express himself greatly surprised and pleased to find "young ladies, who could behave themselves," so far from London. A writer on Scandinavian mythology asked our opinions, took notes of the answers before our eyes, and dissected our remarks along with his friends, as if we were an interesting Indian or negro tribe which he had lighted on. My conscience does not sting me for rehearsing to that man some utterly improbable legends of my own invention which he carefully noted as bearing on important discoveries he had made in northern literature, never once pausing to enquire from whence I had culled such an astonishing tissue of romance! But I confess I feel sorry for the way we *crammed* another who persisted in analyzing every dish we put on the table, in his zeal for the



discovery of native tastes, &c. His good-nature equalled his world-known sagacity, but the pencil and note book produced at table were too much for us ; so giving a Shetlandic name to everything, peppering sweet morsels, putting vinegar to cake, and sugar to curry, we managed to convert our simple dishes into something like a heathen's bill of fare, and our guest was transported with delight !!


I have a hazy recollection of a dabbler in languages who was talking *very big* on that subject, and in fact showing off his learning to the abashed and wondering inhabitants. His host listened with becoming deference, seldom venturing to do more than ask a simple question. He allowed the boaster to flounder through Icelandic, Danish, German, in all which his hearer was perfectly at home. At last the tables were turned. "Do you understand Norwegian?" the *native* asked in that language. He was desired to repeat his question, which he did with the addition of some remarks about the Norsemen. The linguist stammered and said he had not studied *that* enough for conversation. "Danish, you seem acquainted with and will recollect this," and the Shetlander repeated a sweet Danish poem. It is needless to say that he received a negative answer. Almost all the continental as well as northern languages were tried, and when the boaster's utter ignorance on the subject which he professed to be at home in had been laid bare, and the

honour of the Old Rock vindicated, the conversation was turned into another channel. How different from this are my sunny memories of another who came to Shetland to gather what remained of the dead Norske. The gentle dignity of his bearing, the kindly gracious way he explained many points, with which he was as intimately acquainted as if he had been born a Viking, won our hearts at once. I have few fresher recollections than that of his handsome face bent over a list of Shetland words which he was analyzing with a shrewd simplicity that astonished me. His resemblance at that moment to the great Hero of his house and name added not a little to the interest awakened.

But there were two annual visitors to Shetland who were alike my dread and aversion. These were the custom house officer and the horse-dealer!! I confess I entered into the smuggling propensities of the people with the sympathy of one of themselves. They did not make a trade of it. The tobacco and rum were only for their own use, and we never could see why a poverty-stricken place like Shetland should not be exempt from a hard tax. But there was the never-failing additional attraction of danger, risk, the excitement of the hunt, upon all of which the myrmidons of the law came like so many matter-of-fact extinguishers. Many tricks were played upon the unwelcome visitors, for I had many sympathisers in my antipathy, but no one shared my dislike to

the *horse dealer*. It was not less strong for that He would (as I thought) sneak round the farm and fix his fond affections on the best and dearest of our ponies and then use some dreadful spells which never failed to draw the beloved animals out of our father's possession. I had nourished this great hatred for many years before I understood that it was a buying and selling affair and that no more subtle spell than a good price ever lured away my favourites, but I have not yet got over my belief that horse-dealers are rogues. So much for childhood's prejudices!

When June brought in the brief sweet summer the strangers began to arrive. We seldom knew them beforehand. Many did not even bring an introduction. The small sloop which traded among the islands carried the passengers from port to port—always subservient to the will of the wind! Of course the visitor's first question was about Lodgings. Finding there were none to be had he usually asked to be directed to the clergyman, laird, or doctor, and with no further claim than the sacred name of Stranger he was hospitably received. In looking back upon the many who thus came into our circle, and from whom we received far more benefit than any we could ever bestow I love to remember that many of Life's dearest friendships were thus formed. Of course, in some cases we never heard further of those accidental guests, but from the temporary acquaintance of all we derived an amount of pleasure and profit which they could scarcely com-



prehend. I daresay it must be difficult for those who live in a stirring circle of their own, who daily jostle a mighty multitude and draw from thence a varied store of life-experiences, to understand the enjoyment given by their society to the dwellers in a remote isolated region like that of Shetland.

What a change has come over the old place since the time of which I have these chequered memories. The last ten years have overturned everything in the islands and the only comfort left is the thought that not even long-headed Aberdonians can stamp the traces of a ruthless hand upon the Norland seas ; or give the rocks of Fatherland notice to quit !

Civilization has got up to Shetland at last. The telegraph wires have found their way even there, and twice-a-week a first-class passenger steam-boat leaves Granton *en route* for the islands.

The time spent on the voyage is not long if we consider that the vessel spends a few hours at Aberdeen, Wick, and Kirkwall, thus giving one an opportunity of seeing many interesting places by the way. Arrived at Lerwick the traveller finds a good hotel and he can purchase a guide book. He can embark in a steam-boat which takes him among the islands touching at all points of interest, and if he wishes to remain at any of these for a time he will find neat little lodging-houses where he may be very comfortable if his happiness does not depend on beef-steaks ! Oh yes. It is all cut and sliced and buttered *now*, and the genuine

tourist may "do" Shetland as easily as many other portions of Britain. I trust he may leave as pleasant "footprints" behind as the greater portion of his predecessors have done.



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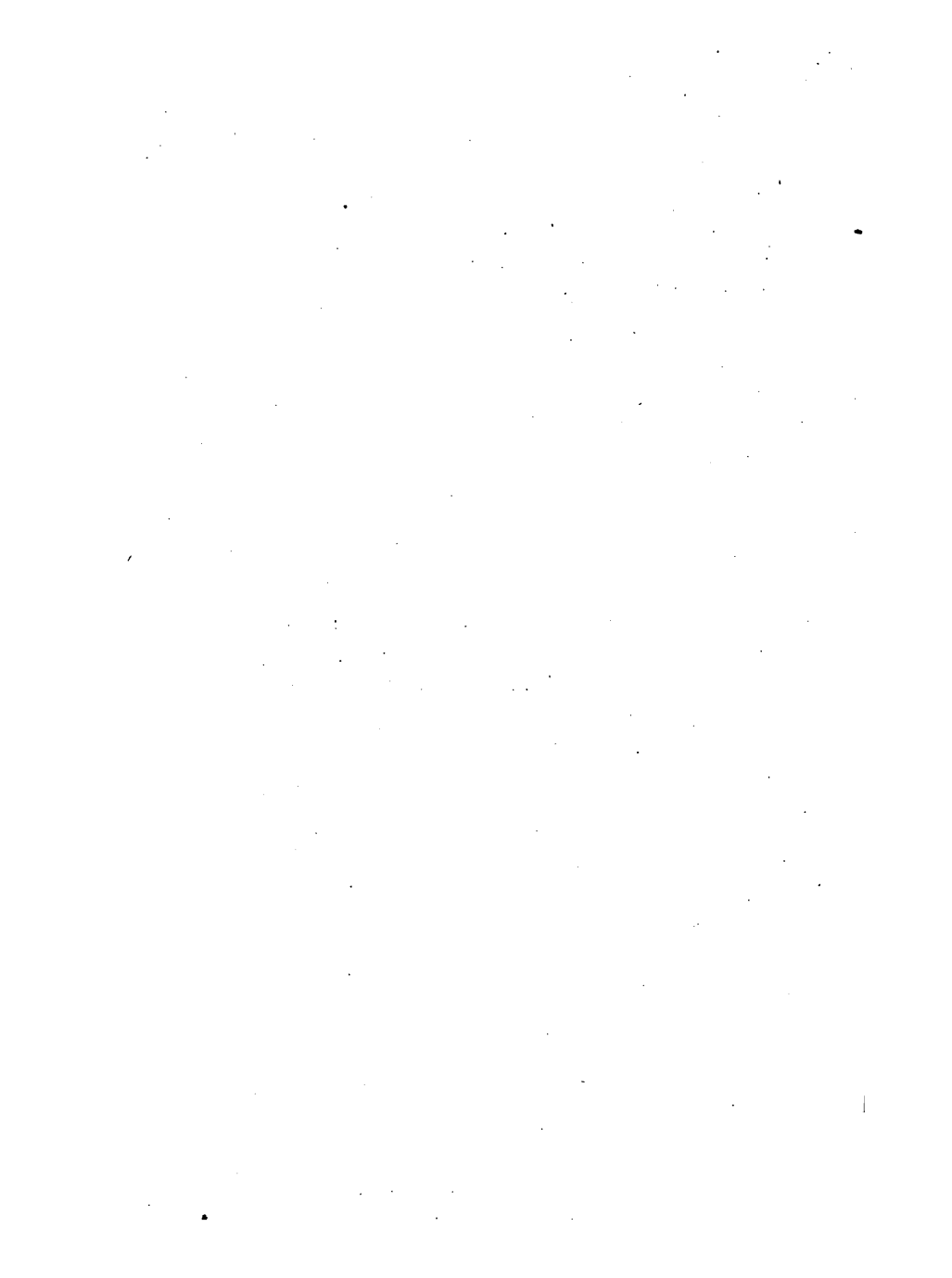
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- Figure 1.** The effect of the number of trials on the mean accuracy of the responses. The error bars represent the standard error of the mean.



